

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

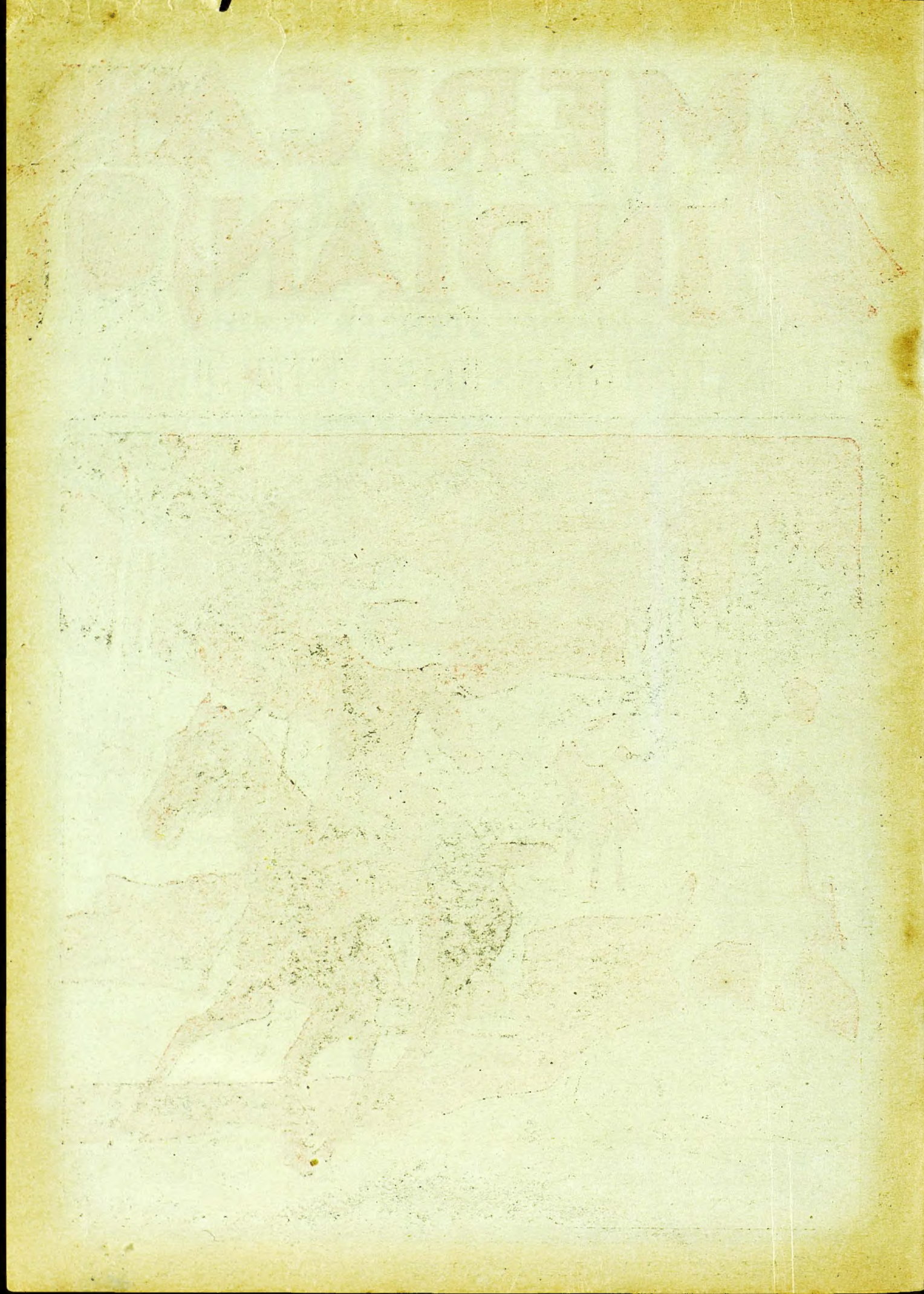
AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

THE MAIL RIDER'S DASH WITH DEATH.

"RIDE FAST, GIRL, IF YOU
ARE NOT READY TO DIE!"





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The Mail Rider's Dash with Death or The Desperado of Poker Flat

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

WINK STONE—The gallant, handsome, brave, and clever young Mail Rider, who flashes back and forth between the hamlet of Constable, on the Constable River, British North America, to Emerson House, a fur-trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company; carrying the mail between those points and thus composing part of the business history of the North-West. In the progress of his daily duty Stone becomes involved in the shooting-up of the Constable post-office, and of the Dew Drop Inn, the principal saloon in Constable, followed by the robbery of both places by Club Foot George Anderson, and others working under the leadership of Furneaux, the celebrated bandit of Constable River. It devolves upon Stone to chase the robber-outlaws down for the crime of robbing the post-office, while a Royal North-West Mounted Policeman assists in the work, and led by Stone, through many hair-raising dangers, the two men "make-good." The raid on the Dew Drop Inn and the post-office by the outlaws meets merited retribution by the hardy representatives of the Law.

NED FORD—He is a gallant constable in the ranks of the North-West Mounted Police sent from Fort Coppermine, British North America, to the hamlet of Constable, to arrest Club Foot George Anderson, the outlaw. Club Foot George is "wanted" for many serious crimes. How the constable became involved in the hold-up and shootin'-up of two of the main business points in Constable and how he followed his "inner orders," makes good red blood dance in one's veins as they follow the constable's fine career of dangers successfully met and conquered.

CARRIE DENTON—Blonde, golden-haired, pert, twenty, and rich. But with all these things to spoil her, still a high type of worthy girlhood. Her meeting with a chain of circumstances that linked her in the dangers that surrounded Wink Stone and Ned Ford, shows how a girl can worthily face grave dangers at the hands of the outlaws of the far North-West. Carrie knows what it means now to hold one's life at the hazard of the revolver, and why it is that men are made of sterner stuff than women. She is a sweet character worth a quiet corner in this story of deeds of stirring action.

FURNEAUX—That tells his story, briefly. For Furneaux the

outlaw is known all over British North America. If he had another name no one knows it. A man of deep, dark deeds of mystery. A gun-man, and outlaw, with brains, that under a different environment would have lifted him to a high plane. His scheming and his bravery all come to nought in the wild storm of a British American night, when he tries to "break jail" at Constable.

CLUB FOOT GEORGE ANDERSON—Just a simple, unlettered, ignorant, hard-drinking, hard-fighting outlaw. When Constable Ford arrests Furneaux, the outlaw leader, by the aid of Wink Stone, the Mail Rider, Club Foot George is elected leader of the bandit gang. How he fought for his title, held it, and yet fell with it, is a tale of stirring scenes.

MAJOR HUNTER—Otherwise and more happily called by his friends, "Maje." If he had not the pleasant habit of getting "spifficated" four times a year he would have made a better bar-keeper of the Dew Drop Inn—but then he was pretty popular in that gin-mill, at that.

GENERAL WHITTON—Just a mere hot-air General. He fought more with his mouth than he did with his guns, and is still hunting "fer that thar ammernition."

THE RAT—A half breed Indian member of the outlaw gang led by Furneaux the famous bandit.

RED THOMPSON—An outlaw who thought he should have been elected leader of the Furneaux band after the real leader was captured by Wink Stone and Ned Ford. How Club Foot George "woke up the pretender to leadership honors" is a story of a fight worth reading.

SHORTY ADAMS—A gun-man and thug member of the Furneaux outlaw crowd. He cast his fortunes with Club Foot George, and played a devious part in the story of the outlaw's rise and fall.

MOOSOMIN—The Indian wife of the bandit Club Foot George.

BULL—The fierce bull-dog executioner of the outlaw gang, and who filled his part unwittingly so far as his owner, Club Foot George was concerned.

DOMINIE ABNER SCATTERGOOD. Last but not least, in the list of characters in this story, as becomes him, because he was always "last," in the game of life, but a good fellow and a merry one withal, in his chosen work as tutor to Carrie Denton.

CHAPTER I.

AN OUTLAW'S TRICK.

Club Foot George, the outlaw, stuck his gun in the

holster of his belt and swaggered out of the Dew Drop Inn.

The weapon was still smoking.

The saloon looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

There had never been such a wreck of a place since the tiny town of Constable, on the Constable River, British North American had been founded six months before as a fur trading post.

But then, Club Foot George Anderson, had never before broken loose in the town, or in its most imposing saloon.

"I sure shot-up this place," cried Club Foot George as he strutted along.

But the self-glorification of the bandit was short-lived.

There came beating on the air the swift tramp of a rushing horse.

In the clear air the sound seemed to be the only thing stirring now that the pop, pop, pop of Club Foot George's Army revolver had stopped.

The outlaw's face was transfixed with hatred.

He knew the rider of the swiftly charging horse, and his hand clutched his revolver as if about to draw it, but with a fierce oath, he seemed to decide that this was not the proper move to make.

"Here he comes!" cried Club Foot George to himself. "He outer be given hisen but I'll wait erwhile."

The hoof-beats now turned into something actual.

A horse darted around a bluff, along which the Emerson House trail ran and there rushed into view, Wink Stone, the Mail Rider, who daily rode from Constable to Emerson House, a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, one hundred miles away.

Every other day Wink Stone came tearing back over the same trail.

A little bunch of endurance. A bundle of nerves, muscle and courage; the *Mail Rider* who kept two important trading posts in communication with each other and who thus was an important spoke in the whirling wheels of commerce of the North-West.

Club Foot George limped along in disdain.

The high boot he wore on his right foot with the great misshapen heel that propped up the foot, which was shorter than its fellow, was the deformity that gave the bandit his name.

Muttering oaths, trailing his "game" leg after the other, Club Foot George, tried not to notice the form of Wink Stone, as it came bobbing along on its beautiful gray horse.

But Wink Stone was on the lookout.

He saw the bandit.

He pulled his horse to a standstill in one wave of dust and dirt.

"Here Club Foot George," yelled Wink. "There's a man looking for you at Poker Flat."

Club Foot George scowled.

"At Poker Flat? Man lookin fer me, huh? Who was he?"

Wink Stone looked down from his horse at the outlaw.

Wink raised one hand to his eye. His index finger was extended. With his thumb and finger of his other

hand he made a startling snapping sound.

Club Foot George understood perfectly.

The motion was that of presenting a very large revolver at one's head.

"You're wanted!" smilingly said the Mail Rider. "Get!"

Then with a wonderful burst of speed the staunch and true Mail Rider went at his best speed onward to deliver the Emerson House mail to the post-office at Constable.

With a snarl of rage and half-fear, the outlaw sunk into the forest depths that was trying to spoil the work of man by growing along the trail and reclaiming their own by drawing it again into the wilderness.

Wink Stone loped along until he reached the frame one story building the town of Constable called a post-office.

He jumped from his horse which an Indian hostler quickly led away to the stables of the Emerson House and Constable, Coach and Mail Rider Express limited.

The coach carried passengers and the mail, once every two weeks; the mail rider carried only himself, and incidentally the mail every other day each way.

It was somewhat quicker to write a letter to either end of the company's baliwick than it was to make one trip between them.

But with his day's work over, and a trifle thirsty and weary, Wink soon had walked across to his favorite inn, known as the Dew Drop Inn, which many people "do—drop in" often, early and late, in the hamlet.

He stopped petrified with astonishment at the threshold of the saloon.

"I'll be jiggered!" he cried to the solitary inmate of the place, "what has happened?"

The inmate turned his face toward Wink.

He sat on a whiskey-barrel, Wink saw, and while he did not move his body in the slightest, he did move his head.

This gave him the odd appearance of a mechanical doll.

In spite of himself, Wink laughed at the woe-begone face of the man on the barrel.

He remembered him at once as Major Hunter, better known as Maje, the bar-keeper at the Dew Drop Inn.

Maje "blew in" to Constable just twenty-four hours after it was started. He got a job as bar-tender in the Dew Drop Inn, and he had held the job ever since, except when he was "spificated"; that meaning he was on a "drunk."

This happened with great regularity every four months.

The rest of each year Maje was the soberest man in the hamlet.

Wink's eyes traveled from Maje's woe-stricken face around the saloon.

There were the signs of a muss every where, a muss in North Western language meaning a shoot-up of a place.

Tables were over-turned. The bar was a tangle of glass broken into bits. A mirror behind the bar was shattered. Every glass-lamp globe in the saloon was shattered. Chairs were heaped about the room, some broken, others intact, but all lying about helter-skelter.

"What's happened?" cried Wink. "Oh, I know, who shot-up the place?"

Maje who was staunching the blood from his face, where it had been laid open by a knife-cut stared at Wink.

Wink spoke again.

"Who shot ye up?" he asked.

Maje did not reply.

He tottered to the bar, selected two unbroken glasses from the wreckage, after some search finding a bottle of whiskey, which he placed before the astonished mail-rider, and then winked his eye.

"Drink!" Maje said.

After each man had taken about three fingers of "red-licker" into their interiors, Maje tottered back to the whiskey barrel and sat down again.

He went fast asleep immediately.

"Here, you!" shouted Wink. "Maje! Wake up!"

After some difficulty Maje woke up as requested.

"Now who shot up this place?" cried Wink, when he found that Maje was awake.

"Sleepy!" replied Maje. "Les hav' nozer ball."

Then Wink knew.

"The spifficated" era of Maje had begun.

But Wink persevered.

"Who shot ye up?" he reiterated.

"Club Foot George."

"When?"

"'Bout n'hour 'go."

"Was Club Foot George alone?"

"Yep."

"No one with him?"

"Yep."

"Here you, how could he be alone, and yet you say 'yep' when I ask you if any one was with him?"

Maje replied by a gentle snore.

This time Wink walked up to the bar-tender and administered a good round box on his ear.

"I know it's time t' git up," he cried, "but ye needn't kill a feller if it is."

Wink laughed.

But the blow had awakened the bar-tender.

He fixed a glassy eye on Wink.

"Whacheewant?" he asked.

"Answers to my questions."

"If ye have sense enough to ask questions why don't ye have sense enough to answer them?"

"I suppose I ought to have. But I want to know a thing or two. Tell me all about the shoot-up?"

"You go ahead and ask questions, I'll gin ye answers all right."

The effort at conversation had somewhat sobered Maje.

"Very well. Here goes," replied Wink. "Was Club Foot George alone when he held you up?"

"He was—'cept fer his dawg."

"You mean the bull pup he always has with him?"

"Sure."

Wink remembered that he had not had a sight of the bull-pup when he saw the outlaw stumping down the road. He wondered where the dog had gone.

"How did he open up his game?"

"He limps in, the outlaw brute, and he says 'Gimme a drink'. I gin it. Then when my hans' was on th' bottle and th' glass ter sarve him—bang out comes his gun."

"Well, what then?"

"Thar want no what, then. He naturally marches me outen ter this whiskey barrel. He sets me down

wit me han's up. He takes me gun from me belt, and the feller did et by takin' me at er disadvantage."

"At a what?"

"A disadvantage. How in thunder eud I git ter me gun with one hand erholding on a bottle o' good booze, an' the other onto a glass?"

"I see."

The remembrances of his wrongs made Maje eloquent and partially sober.

"Ye see," he added, "this hyar band-eet he up's an' watches his chanst. He sees me occerpied, an' then he pulls his weapon. Holy cats, but he pulls it all right."

Wink grinned.

"Get on to what happened after the outlaw, Club Foot George, sat you on a barrel to absorb that gentle jag you have with you."

"I didn't absorb ut. I drank on it jest the way you uns does wen ye gits your jag."

"All right. I'll forgive you! But get on with your story."

"Wall, Club Foot George he naturally felt safe wen he sees the only gun-man in the place wit his hands above his head."

"You being the gun-man?"

"Shore. The only other man in th' place wen the shootin' up begins is me Injun helper. He didn't count. Club Foot George hadn't got his gun out 'fore the Injun was out of that thar door."

"Was he runnin'?"

"Naw. Runnin' wasn't fast enough. Say, he was a flyin'. I'll bet ef he haint changed his gait he's domned near up ter the Arctic Ocean by this hyar time. He! He! He!"

Maje wrinkled his nose in his effort to get sober enough to laugh.

"Was that all?"

"All? Man thet was the begerning."

"What happened next?"

Maje helplessly waved his hand in an all covering gesture over the wreck.

"Take yar own view o' et," Maje remarked with cynical indifference. "Thar's a new scene disclosed ter yar wonderin' eyes any whar ye look in the Dew Drop."

Wink looked about in confirmation of the words of Maje. He saw that any possible angle gave a new scene of which utter wreck was the key note.

"Yes, you were shot up all right."

"Betcherboots. Les' hev 'nother ball?"

Maje staggered over to his beloved friend, just then, the whiskey bottle.

"Not any more for mine," cried Wink. "I'm no whiskey still. One drink after a day on horse back is enough for me."

Wink bethought him that he was sorry he had warned Club Foot George of his danger at his home in Poker Flat by the arrival there of a member of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

Poker Flat was only a mile from Constable.

It consisted of the following inventory—

A—One house.

B—Club Foot George, the outlaw.

C—Club Foot George's Indian wife.

D—One shack of boards in which dwelt one horse, the property of the outlaw.

That was all.

And Club Foot George?

No one knew much about him.

He drifted in to Constable one day on a raw-boned pinto broncho. He lead a mule on which was packed all his belongings on the high-peak saddle used for such occasions.

Along side of the raw-boned pinto trudged Club Foot George's Indian wife, Moosomin, a tall-coppery-colored girl of about twenty years of age, straight as an arrow, with regular features, and great pathetic black eyes.

But like her race, she walked and toiled while her husband rode with the chiefs.

For a few days, George Anderson, as he would tell all who asked his name that was his baptismal cognomen, lived at Constable, camping on the outskirts of the town.

Then he moved over to Poker Flat where he built the plant enumerated in the foregoing inventory.

There he had since lived.

Where he came from no one asked. People respected the veil of silence that men or women in the North-West drew over their past.

There are some things that ought not to be asked about in the polite world of the frontier. That was what your name used to be and where you hailed from!

There was a suspicion that Club Foot George, for so his unfortunate deformity had been used as an identifying part tacked to his name by the Constable folk, had been a gun-man somewhere.

That was all, however.

Nothing was known. It was all mere suspicion.

So Club Foot George had lived for about a year, until the day he had walked into the Dew Drop Inn and shot-up the place.

These facts wandered through Wink Stone's mind.

But why had Club Foot George shot-up the Dew Drop Inn?

That was a question.

Men don't commit crimes like the one that showed everywhere in the wrecked condition of the saloon in mere wanton freaks of passion.

The time has gone by when a man can ride up to a saloon and shoot it up in mere wanton mischief.

These two thoughts went directly to the brain of Wink.

With their arrival came another thought.

The combination sent Wink behind the bar.

His eyes took in the scene at once.

Close against the wall stood a large safe.

The door of the safe, battered and torn, lay on the floor directly in front of the safe.

It told its story.

"The shoot-up was part of a robbery!" gasped Wink. "Club Foot George is guilty of the shoot up, which I see was also a hold-up. The Dew Drop Inn has been robbed."

Wink ran back to Maie.

"Do you know how much money was in that safe?" he shouted.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars!" stammered Maie. "That was the faro bank roll of the place—an' we was keepin' cash fer a lot of the boys. Thet 'uld make fifteen thou' more, and last week's receipts o' the bar, an' a lot o' stuff o' the boys we loaned money on—say, thar's sixty er seventy thousan' dollars gone."

"That's a pretty big holdup for these parts," said an amused voice.

The words came from the lips of a tall, broad should-

ered man who strode into the door, and smiled as he looked about the wrecked saloon.

CHAPTER II.

CLUB FOOT GEORGE PLOTS.

Snarling like a wolf, and swearing like a certain army in Flanders, the outlaw, George Anderson, better known about Constable and Poker Flat as Club Foot George, hurried as fast as he could back into the depths of the forest that fringed Constable about in its girdle of green.

George did not lack for speed in spite of his foot.

He hurried away at such speed that soon he caught sight of a man, seated on a log.

Beside the man were two horses.

Each animal was grazing on the leaves and grass about them.

The man who was holding their bridles was tall, well formed and handsome in a bluff, animal way.

His business was emphasized by his belt bristling with revolvers and knives. There were four huge guns, five knives, while two rifles leaned against his legs.

They were of the deadly repeating type.

The man whistled softly when he saw Club Foot George stumping along.

"This way," he cried. "Here I am!"

The words indicated a meeting that had been pre-arranged.

"All right!" replied Club Foot George as he hurried, if anything at a faster pace.

Soon Club Foot George was standing beside the tall man.

The extreme deference which he paid him showed that the stranger was of high repute, at least in the mind of Club Foot George.

"Well, did you win out?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, Cap'n Furneaux," cried Club Foot George. "I've pulled over the game."

"Good!"

"I follered instructions."

"Good again. Tell me about it."

"Simplest thing you ever saw. I jest hev been' livin' in Poker Flat since I drive inter Constable with me Injun wife."

"I know that. Proceed."

"Then I nat'ul like now and then gets me likker et the Dew Drop Inn."

"Where the safe full of money was placed?"

"Shore. They's get ter know me pretty well erbout thet thar saloon."

"Of course."

"So I fixes the game ter come offen airly this mornun."

"Ah?"

"I gits ter that saloon about seven this mornun."

"Any one there?"

"No, Cap'n, 'cept the bar-keep Maje Hunter, and a Injun helper about thet thar gin-mill."

"I know Maje, and I've seen the Injun."

Club Foot George stared.

"Ye hev? Waal yar was runnin' some risk. Thar's a pritty big reward on yar head, fer Cap'n Furneaux, outlaw chief, yer knows is wanted all around this hyar No'th West from one end ter the 'tother. Ef I was *you* I wouldn't run no risks jest yit o' goin' up again settle-munts. I'd hide out in these hyar woods, boy, fer a spell. They's ain't ergoin' ter stop ter give ye a trial wen they's ketches *you*."

There was a smile of disdain on the face of Furneaux, the celebrated bandit.

Known all over the gun-man frontier town as a thug, murderer, thief, hold-up man, and outlaw, there never was a man more "wanted" by the honest men of the territory than Furneaux, outlaw and bandit.

"That's so," he shouted, with a smile of half disdain, half anger. "I am not looked upon with favor. Since I left my Montreal home ten years ago I have blazed a crimson trail of blood all over the North-West, but I'm not going to get caught yet. Not much!"

"Cap'n," said Club Foot George, "ef I hed yar eddication I'd quit this game an' never come back ter it no more. They ain't nawthin' in it fer an eddicated man like ye is. Yar kin make mazuma withouten a robbin' people fer it hyar at the end o' a 45 calebeer gun."

Furneaux laughed.

"How?" he asked.

"Why Cap'n thar's a lot o' fellers wot hes eddication er runnin' just some old hold-up games East in them big cities o' Canada, an' in them big cities o' the Unit'd States. Them fellers hez the Lor' with em. They haint gotter run an inch wen they see a No'th West Mounted Policemun. Ner does they'se hev ter run wen they sees an hones' man the way ye does—now, Cap'n, ye gits yar stuff outten this last hold-up and pull your hosses fer them eddicated hold-up spots. Say, they's gotten these hyar places beat a mile."

Furneaux laughed again.

"I am thinking," he said, "that your words are wise. I'll think them over; for between us the legalized hold-up game has got this North-West one beaten to a pulp. There's no danger in those games. Here there's the halter end. They don't give a man a cell, all fitted up with luxury, an easy job, good food and fun, for a few years as the reward of stealing millions out here. They don't call that game a 'punishment.' They hang a thief out here, quick, eh?"

"Yep. But say, Cap'n, the eddicated thief has the best o' ut ye see—even in trickery eddication counts."

"Well, maybe you're right. But you sure had enough education to pull over this little game you have been telling me of down at the Dew Drop Inn."

"Shore. Waal, I'll finish me tale o' woe quick now. I gets ter the saloon an I orders me a drink o' Maje. Wen he gits his han's occerpied like wit a glass en a bottle I jest puts me gun in his face an leads him ter a barrel."

"What next?"

"I turns loose with me gun. I shoots every ting in sight-n'—"

"Some of our boys jumps in and turns the rest of the trick."

"Shore."

"Did they get away with the gold?"

"They did."

"Used 'soup' (nitro-glycerin) on the safe door?"

"Shore! They hed the safe blown up fore I gets half the lamps in the saloon shot out."

"Ho! Ho! Great work, boy!"

"Want it?"

"Indeed it was. Did they get all the boodle?"

"Every dollars wuth. They aint nawthin' left but the busted safe."

"That's the way to pull off our work. I knew you could do it when I planted you there—did anv one suspect who you were?"

"Naw. I fooled em all."

"How?"

"I tole em me right name."

Furneaux smiled grimly.

He well knew this was an absolute disguise among the wild men who made up most of the population of frontier towns.

"If you did that," he replied, "you have fooled them sufficiently. They never would suspect you of anything under your real name."

Club Foot George winked.

"There's nawthin' more to do is there?" he asked.

"How did you know where to meet me?" asked the outlaw leader.

"I sure didn't know 'actly," replied Club Foot George. "My woman sez she was pritty sure you ud be about har."

"Oh, Moosomin, eh?"

"Yass. She's a pretty good girl ter me, an' makes a better wife nor I desurve. She sez you wer har."

"Most any wife is better than you deserve. How did she know I was here?"

"I dunno. There she is. Why not ask her?"

As he spoke the form of the Indian wife of Club Foot George could be seen coming through the woods.

"How!" she said sententiously as she came near.

"How!" replied Furneaux as he gazed curiously at the girl, who returned his gaze with interest.

This was the first time that Moosomin had seen the leader of the outlaw band of Constable River, one of the most infamous in the North-West.

It was a band with wide ramifications.

No one knew exactly who belonged to it.

It is probable that, as circumstances indicated, Furneaux, the outlaw, seized upon this or that man, right or left, to help him in "pulling over" some deed of rapine or blood.

As time went on these men, having been successful in one criminal event under Furneaux' leadership, were in a loosely understood gang compact with him, but not strong enough for him to enforce demands upon them made at any time.

They simply belonged to a syndicate or crime with Furneaux as a sort of over-lord.

Then aside from this gang there were half a dozen cronies of Furneaux who were intimately associated with him and who stuck to him through thick or thin.

When the crimes of the bandit drove him to the forest to escape punishment, the chosen few went with him as a guard of honor and to assist in any desperate deed that might come up.

Club Foot George, the Desperado of Poker Flat, was one of this number.

As every man now closely associated with Furneaux had a price on his head, like the leader, there was no question but that the gang would hang together for their common good.

They knew that if they did not they would soon be caught and lynched by indignant citizens.

In the cavern where Club Foot George had his home in Poker Flat, there always stood an arsenal of weapons ready for use to fit the conditions that existed around the desperado.

It was for this reason that Furneaux bristled like an arsenal with deadly weapons and led one horse and rode another when away from his camp. He knew the time would come when he would need all the horses he had to carry him away from an indignant population and he would have to use all his weapons to repel attacks made upon his life.

Vague as was each man's mind in the two present in the leafy expanse, and equally vague as was the mind of the woman, some of the ideas expressed above floated through their brains; they knew that they were a proscribed race and that at any time they might meet their doom.

Furneaux broke the rather strained silence.

He turned toward Moosomin and asked her why she was there.

The dark eyes of the girl rested on her husband's face asking permission to speak, or a negative to the question of the chief outlaw.

Club Foot George nodded his head at his wife.

Then she spoke.

"There's been a man at Poker Flat asking after my husband," the girl said in surprisingly clear English. She had been educated at an Indian Mission school.

"Ah," cried Furneaux. "What kind of a looking man?"

"How was he dressed?" added Moosomin. "Do you mean what kind of a man was he? What did he wear?"

"Yes," replied Furneaux.

Moosomin gazed full at her husband as she replied.

"The man wore the uniform of the North-West Mounted Police," she replied.

"Hah!" cried Furneaux, as his hand sought his rifle standing near leaning against a tree.

The hand of Club Foot George grasped his rifle.

The two outlaws exchanged glances of deadly meaning.

"We are wanted for that last hold-up over in Yukon territory," hissed Furneaux. "I think this man comes to arrest us for that."

"Arrest us? Ho! Ho! Ho! Nonsense! Who ter devil 'ud hev the nerve ter try ter arrest us?"

"He no catch us. Not much."

These two exclamations broke from the Indian girl and her husband when Furneaux had spoken.

But Furneaux was more experienced.

He knew that the arrival of the young North-West Mounted Policeman would crystallize all of the dormant feeling against him and his band, as well as the fact that the outrage in shooting and holding up the Dew Drop Inn, was an act that citizens of Constable would not idly stand by and watch.

The saloon was the club house of a great many of the Constable men folk, and they would aid any attempt to bring the perpetrator of the act of injustice and robbery to justice.

Furneaux' mind was made up at once.

He turned toward his companions.

"Come with me," he cried, "Our lives or that of that Mounted Policeman are at stake. I'm going to round-

up that fellow with the warrant and kill him as soon as I get the chance."

"We'll hunt fer the chance, Cap'n," cried Club Foot George. "That thar feller is as good as dead right neow."

Moosomin gurgled in her throat in delight at seeing a man die with the savagery of her race that never can be tamed by English speaking people. And for that matter not by any people speaking any stranger tongue.

CHAPTER III.

A SEARCH FOR AN OUTLAW.

"Why, for goodness sake, if it isn't Ned Ford!"

When the mysterious form had entered the Dew Drop Inn, these were the words that burst from the lips of Wink Stone.

"It's Ned Ford, all right," the speaker added, "but what he is doing here beats me."

"Don't let that worry you," came the ringing answer from Ford. "I'm here not because I want to be but because I'm ordered here."

The speaker wore the uniform of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

His ruddy face was lighted up by a pair of fine brown eyes. His very close cut hair was brown. He was broad shouldered; athletic, a goodly picture to look upon.

"I know you, Wink Stone," the man hailed as Ford laughed. "I've known you for ten years!"

Stone laughed in return and shook the new-comer warmly by the hand.

"Has it been that long, Ned?" he queried. "Ten years is a good long time."

"Well, we were somewhat younger then than we are now," cried Ford. "Let's see, were we in school back in Toronto together?"

"We certainly were."

"Then we separated—well here I am on the Royal North-West Mounted Police and you—what are you doing?"

"Ridin' mail between here and Emerson House," replied Stone.

"Well, we each of us do some horse-back riding—but that isn't what I'm hear to talk about. I'll tell you if you want to know as it's no secret now."

As he spoke Ford gazed about the wrecked saloon.

"You needn't talk, I've known for some time. You're after the chap who shot up this place?"

"You're on."

"Well, it was Club Foot George, the outlaw."

"I know it."

"He shot-up this place this morning, and escaped—and I was to blame for it."

"To blame for what? Shooting-up the saloon or for the escape?"

"For the escape."

"Ah. That's too bad—but tell me about it."

"Sure. You know I come riding through Poker Flat

each day I'm on the way back from Emerson House and Constable."

"Yes."

"Well, when I came riding through Poker Flat today I saw you."

"Saw me? What was I doing?"

"Talking to Moosomin, the Injun wife of Club Foot George Anderson."

"Ha!"

"Now I know the uniform of your pretty well. So does most every one in the North-West. I just made up my mind to the fact that you were after Club Foot George?"

"You did, eh?"

"I did."

"A shrewd guess."

"So it turned out."

"Why?"

"Because if I'd known you were the man talking to that coppery colored vixen I'd not have warned Club Foot George!"

Ford's eyes made two exclamation points.

"So you warned Club Foot George?"

"I did."

"When?"

"Not three minutes after I saw you."

"Where?"

"On the Emerson House trail."

"You mean the trail that leads to the new Hudson's Bay Company post at Emerson House, where they trade with the Indians and whites for furs?"

"I do."

"You met Club Foot George?"

"I did."

"What was he doing?"

"He was walking along with his usual limp, snarling at fate like the human wolf he is."

"Where was his bull dog?"

"I dunno."

"You don't—well, I do."

"Well, I was surprised that no one knew where the dog was for it's been the side-partner of George's ever since he came into the town, but as you know where he is you might as well tell me."

"I've locked him up in the stable with my horse."

"What did you do that for?"

"To get a line on his owner."

"Huh?"

"Why that dog will follow Club Foot George into the other world, I guess, if he is loosed."

"That's your plan, eh?"

"It is."

"In other words you are going to make the dog act as a detective for you?"

"Quite right."

"Good idea. That is it's a good idea if——"

"If what?"

"If you make it work."

"Well, plans are all good plans up to the time they don't work."

"Then what?"

"Or if they don't work they are bad plans."

"Guess you're right. But I owe you an apology any way."

"What for?"

"For putting that outlaw on to the fact that you were after him."

"That was an error of judgment, of course."

"No question of that. But I have a 'good excuse.'"

"What is it?"

"I didn't know it was you who was after George."

"Oh, you didn't?"

"No."

"Would you have told him then?"

"You mean would I have told him had I known it was you?"

"That's it."

"Certainly not. Now I have absolutely no use for Club Foot George Anderson."

"I don't suppose you have."

"But you see he has been 'in our midst' for some time. I looked upon him as a friendly townsman, who was up against the law. You know we don't like the law out here——"

"Or any of its—ah, its enforcers the Royal North-West Mounted Police?"

"Exactly. Feeling as I do on that question, why, I just thought I'd tip George off, so that he could get away, not knowing he would get into any such dirty business as a shoot-up of a saloon."

"Oh, old chap, don't apologize. I appreciate your feelings even if it did mean trouble for me, but I know how you feel. It's the average feeling of any man, it seems to me. Love for a policeman, mounted or unmounted, doesn't seem to be in the average man."

"Right you are. Well in this case I erred, so as to write."

"Also, so as to speak. You certainly have put me in a hole and yourself also."

"Why?"

"Did you know that the gang who assisted Club Foot George to pull over this neat little trick, which ended in the robbery of the Dew Drop Inn safe also paid a visit to the post office here?"

"Wh-a-t?"

"Yep. They not only shot up this place, nitro-glycerined the safe but they *robbed the post office safe*."

"Jumping snakes!"

"That's what."

Wink was thunderstruck.

His blood boiled to think that he had tried to do a friendly act to a thug who all the time was meditating how to rob and plunder the main monied centers of the town of Constable.

"That hits me," Wink said. "I'm a mail rider. I belong in a way to the post-office department."

"Guess you do all right."

"I was idiot enough to give the tip to the outlaw, when if I hadn't he would have been arrested immediately before he—no, by Jove, he had shot up the saloon and robbed the post-office before he met me."

"Yes, he had."

"That's so—well, it was a mistake. I won't let him escape next time."

"That's the talk."

"But will I have a chance next time—will there ever be a next time?"

"There will, my lad. And soon."

Joy was revealed on the countenance of the mail rider.

"That's good words. Say em again."

Ford laughed but complied.

"Then you've got the chance a-comin'," Ford said, "and a-comin' soon."

"Why?"

"Do you know who this Club Foot George Anderson runs with?"

"Not I."

"He runs with Furneaux, the bandit."

Wink jumped in the air, cracked the heels of his high-top boots together thrice in the air, and came down on the tips of his toes.

This step, known in all the dance houses, which he sometimes enlightened with his presence, as "The Postman's Knock," was viewed with much amusement by Ford.

"Hully cats!" said Wink.

This was all the speech he vouchsafed.

"Yes," added Ford, "Furneaux is the head of the gang which has as one of its shining lights your friend, the gentleman you rescued, one, Club Foot George."

Just what Wink said under his breath is not fit for publication.

"Relieves you, doesn't it?" asked Ford.

"What does?"

"A good cussin' out. I've often cussed out situations in my time. It pays to not do so because when you swear you get angry and anger is an emotion that sends all the blood to your head and in the cases of extreme frenzy sometimes induces apoplexy."

"Rats!"

Ford laughed.

"Now, let me tell you, that while we are joking here, your friend and fellow citizen, Major Hunter, over there, has gone to sleep. Some one ought to take him away somewhere, sew up his face, for he has a pretty nasty cut there, see to it that this place is cleaned up, and not deprive all Constable of its morning dram."

"I'll act the part of a good Samaritan," replied Wink. "Here goes."

This meant that he walked to the door and let a yell out of him that could be heard twenty miles, more or less.

With the yell all the prominent citizens of the town who had been hidin' in various cellars, and rat-holes, to escape a possible encounter with the outlaws, came running to the scene, having recognized the stentorian cries of Wink.

This particular yell he always gave when the last turn was made and he was a few hundred feet from the post-office.

Had half the display of arms been made when the hold-up was in progress as it was when men came charging into the saloons in answer to Wink's, a familiar yell, there would have been a fight worth going to see between the townsmen and the outlaws.

"My what a fine force of good shots!" cried Wink. "Where were you fellows when the shoot-up and robbery was going on?"

General Whitton, who led the populace, much as a Roman warrior leads his cohorts comprising a few bow, and a few spindle-legged "supes" in uniforms that never fit, was in the van of the throng. He bore a time eaten Army revolver, that would have injured the General more than a bandit if it had exploded.

The General's title came to him along with the gun. He had never done anything but shoot it on King's Birthday, and that had usually ended in the carting off of the General for repairs.

The General, therefore, was the self elected leader of his posse of citizens.

The General was accepted as leader. The military ability of the man having often been impressed on the populace, by the General who had a splendid memory and remembered all the battles ever fought from the Crimea to the Transvaal by English or Canadian troops, and was, as he told it, a prominent figure in every one.

This adaptability gave him his name of "General," for the military title in itself, from its pure military standpoint, he had no more claim to than a lot of men about him had to the names they were using.

"Whar's the bandit?" cried the General flourishing his ancient weapon.

"Yes, where is he?" howled a mob of about fifty people who were with the General.

Wink smiled at Ford.

"H-u-s-h!" cried Wink in the most melodramatic manner "That's why I called for the General."

The General straightened up visibly.

"Ye wanted th' mil-e-teery abilittee o' me, did yuh? Wall, I've fit befoah in money a wah. I'm reddy t' fight now, ef me coun-tree calls me."

"That's the stuff, General! I always knew that you were a brave man," cried Wink. "The fact is that Constable Ford here and I need you to help us."

"The same I'll do!" cried the General.

"We have the bandit Furneaux, and four of his gang penned up in yonder saloon, which was shot-up by Club Foot George this morning. Now we want you to head a forlorn hope and go in and arrest the bandits while we stay outside and catch him if he comes out."

The General blinked, swallowed hard, turned white. Then he shivered like an aspen leaf in a gale of wind.

"Oh, ho," he gasped feebly. "Of course ye had ter send fer the old Ginerol fer his abili-tee is so well known in the fitin' line. I'm wid ye. Wink. But you just wait. I'll run home en git some more ammernition. This ole gun o' mine haint got but three charges into her an thet aint 'nuff fer the gang she's going ter arrest. Now you jest hole on. I'll be back in five minutes."

Then the General disappeared with remarkable celerity.

The news of the outlaws being penned in the Dew Drop Inn seemed to rush around the rest of the circle of white-faced citizens with alarming freedom.

The shortage of ammunition soon became an appalling fact.

In three minutes there was not a soul left of the valiant company.

"Gone! The name of Furneaux alone scared those chaps half to death," cried Ford.

"It was a joke, but it had its serious side," said Wink, in reply. "You see what the mere idle invoking of the name of Furneaux the outlaw, brings forth. It creates a sudden hiatus in our countrymen. What aid can we expect in a fight with the outlaws?"

"Not any. Yet the fight has got to come."

"Betcher life. I'm in on it, if it's the last fight of our lives. Now then, comrade, whither way finds us together on our bandit quest."

"The good Lord only knows. But between us I'll tell you. I'm going to jump my hoss, go get that bull dog of Club Foot George's and there you are. The dog has got to do the rest."

"Kinder low down trick, isn't it, to make a dog trap his master?"

"I ain't dealin' in the finer feelings you know, when I'm fighting Furneaux and his band. All I want with

him is a good gun and elbow room in which to shoot it. The dog is our only chance. Why, we wouldn't be able to find Furneaux in a thousand years in the forest about here, unless we had the dog to aid us."

"Suppose while we are hunting the outlaw he starts in to hunt us?"

"I see our finish."

"What's that?"

"People would be walking slow behind us to-morrow."

"They would at that."

"We would be there but we wouldn't know anything about the gait our old friends were taking."

"That's no merry jest! But you rustle and get the pup. I'll drop over to the boarding house and get a supply of—ammunition."

The young men then separated to get ready for what each knew was a deadly enterprise.

It meant the death of either Furneaux, the outlaw, and his thug associate Club Foot George, or of themselves.

In half an hour the bull dog, muzzled so that he could neither make outcry or bite, and attached to a long lariat of twisted horsehide, was ready to be put upon the trail of the master of the dog, the outlaw, Club Foot George.

Wink and Ford armed to the teeth, each on a fast horse, were all ready to start when the General came ambling forward.

"I—I got th' ammernition," the General cried. "Whar's them bandits?"

"General," cried Wink, "while you were gone Furneaux and his men escaped. But they have left Major Hunter, 'spificated' in your midst. General, you dear old fraud, go into the saloon. There's no danger and you and your friends can charge all of the whiskey bottles that you wish to do. Help the Major, another valiant military gent with a self-conferred title. See that his wounds are dressed—and, General, don't let a single whiskey bottle escape!"

The General and the remainder of the citizens with him, rushed eagerly to their battle; it was a fight, they were doughty and willing to begin.

The bull dog was hurried to where the Mail Rider had seen Club Foot George first, and had then warned him of the arrival of Ned Ford with a warrant for the outlaw's arrest.

"Look at the dog pull on the chain," whispered Ford.

"See! He is bolting for the forest!" returned Wink.

The good dog sure enough impatiently began pulling at the long lariat.

He soon was leading the way, his eager nose pressing the earth, intent only on rejoining his master, not knowing, poor brute, that he might bring death to his unfortunate owner.

A good fairy gave her the most ravishing yellow hair that any girl ever had. Blue eyes were thrown in as good measure.

Another good fairy presented her with a turn-up nose that was pert and pretty, and gave her face the very thing to make it perfect.

Now, when you place these features in a perfectly oval face, and give all these good points the setting of a beautiful form, you have pretty near the acme of a pretty, it may be said, of a beautiful girl of twenty years of age.

Mounted on a fine black horse that had thoroughbred stamped all over him Carrie Denton was a picture of good looks, good temper and perfect health.

Her companion was a tall man, thin to lean scantiness.

He wore a sort of English riding costume, imported from Scotland at that.

His shovel-hat, his round collar and white tie, and his clerical cut coat, stamped him as a clergyman at once.

The girl wore a riding suit of black, which fitted her well, and showed all the rounded outlines of her beautiful form.

Her dainty feet were shod in long tan boots, and she rode her horse astride in true Western and North-West fashion as if she and the charger were one.

"Dominie," the girl cried, "have you any idea where we are?"

"Indeed I have," said the man, who spoke English well but with a peculiar pronunciation. "We are, don't ye know, about two miles from somewhere that leads, ah, to the trail which will take us to, ah, Constable."

The girl laughed merrily.

"What a lucid explanation," she said. "Why do you not give in the way I have done and state clearly for the information of all concerned that you haven't the slightest idea where we are?"

The clergyman smiled himself in spite of a shade of embarrassment that crossed his face.

"As a matter of fact, now you put it that way, I don't know where we aare, ah, any moah than the crows which are flying above us."

"An open confession is good for the soul," the girl added. "I am so glad to know that you don't know any more about where we are than I do."

"Oh, I know where we are, ah, very we-l-l. We aare in the great for-est some where near the town of Constable, but how neaar I reaalay don't know. Understan' that I am not suah, but I should fawney that we aare not so very far from the town we aare in search of, ah?"

The girl laughed again.

A girl usually laughs when she is twenty years old and the man she is talking to is her tutor, sixty-five if he is a day, and who was known to his friends as Dominie Abner Scattergood.

Dominie Scattergood was employed to bring to an Eastern educational polish Carrie Denton, sole daughter of widower Charles Denton, quite the richest man in the regions thereabouts the hamlet of Constable.

The Dominie had in hand the contract of his life.

Carrie Denton was a natural out-of-doors girl, who loved a horse better than she did a verb, and who could steer a four-in-hand line up of wild bronchos down a

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIRL OF DESTINY.

Carrie Denton had everything propitious when she was born.

dizzy path better than she could add a column of figures.

These things did not appeal to Dominie Scattergood.

But he liked Carrie, who was indeed a lovable girl, and he liked his job, which was easy and better than all the rest, and had a good salary attached to it.

Carrie turned her horse toward that of Dominie Scattergood.

"You are the most provoking man I ever saw. You know more of Greek than you do of our lovely British American forests and—goodness! Fairy, what's the matter?"

The last part of the girl's remark was addressed to her horse who had begun plunging about in the most unsteady manner possible.

The horse had every reason to plunge about.

For there came stealing through the woods, attached to a lariat of twisted rope, the fiercest bull dog, ugly, bow-legged, growling savagely, and taken all in all, about as bloodthirsty a bit of bull-dog as any horse had ever seen.

"Whao! Whoa!" cried the girl excitedly.

Her horse reared high in the air on his hind legs, and then danced a bit unsteadily.

"Look out, Carrie," cried Dominie Abner in alarm.

The girl was not frightened.

Her hand went up above her head, and she struck her horse a sharp blow with her descending fist between its two ears.

Fairy came down with amazing promptness and began dancing about in half fear, half anger.

"Very well done," cried a voice.

It was that of a man, and when she heard it Carrie Denton turned her head to see the comely presence of Wink Stone, while standing near him was Ned Ford, equally as fine a bit of manhood.

The girl's eyes twinkled roguishly.

"Praise from Sir Launcelot, is praise indeed!" she quoted. "The gentleman who has just paid me a compliment, as he passes most of his waking hours on the back of a flying horse, ought to be able to give expert opinion as to the way a poor girl handles her animal."

Wink colored slightly.

"When girls like Miss Carrie Denton venture out in woods which are infested by animals, some of them of the bandit kind, she is taking long chances," replied Wink Stone with his usual easy air.

Dominie Scattergood was filled with dismay at once.

"Good gracious!" he cried, "a bandit? Here in these woods? Let us at once return to the safety of our fireside."

Carrie did not turn pale.

In fact she laughed merrily.

"Poor bandit," she cried, "just think! Our doughty mail rider and this gentleman with him, Ned Ford, of the Royal North-West Mounted Police—with the accent on the 'Royal,' why really, its decidedly unfair!"

"What's unfair?" asked Wink.

"To think that you two gentlemen—to say nothing of this savage dog—are going to, ah, attack the poor lonely bandit. I'm really ashamed of you."

Wink covertly winked at Ford.

It was his habit of winking when he was particularly pleased that had given him the name of Wink;

what his other name was he had almost forgotten himself.

"You see," Wink continued, "we are not going to attack any poor bandit. The reason why we are here is to argue with Furneaux, the famous outlaw, and try to convince him that he is really better off in his grave, than in the business he is in. Our friends who make up the 'Society of Those Who Think that Bandits Ought to be Lynched,' have sent us out here to argue the question of reform with Furneaux. I feel that we will be successful."

Stone who once more winked at Ford, settled back and gave another tug at the mouth of the dog.

"I congratulate you both on your society," Carrie cried merrily. "It is a useful purpose you have in view. Now let us suppose that the outlaw refuses with much heat and with many bullets to listen to the argument that you have put forth to him, that he must stop banditing or be lynched—then what?"

Wink raised his wide white hat.

"Miss Carrie Denton," he cried gravely, "then we shall call in the law. Mr. Ned Ford represents the law. Step forward Ford, like a lawyer should, sure of getting a fat fee from your client."

"In my case, if Miss Carrie Denton is to be my client I am richly paid for any service I may do her by one of her charming smiles."

Carrie looked over toward Dominie Scattergood.

"Didn't he do that well?" she asked, "surprising what things men will do and say in these woods."

"I dare say the, ah, gentleman would make a valuable plea to any outlaw who would, ah, stop to listen to him, but ah, really, don't chew know, I don't think any real bandit would, ah, stop to listen, ah, to the gentleman's plea."

The laughter which followed rather ended the conversation for the moment.

When it was all over, the Dominie who had been gazing in amazement and much mystification wiped his brow and shook his head gravely.

"Really, ah," he said, "but ah, really, don't chew now! But, ah, would you mind telling me what you are all lawfing at, don't chew know?"

"We could tell you, dear Dominie," replied Carrie, "but we feel sure that if we did tell you, we would be mortified by feeling that you don't understand, don't you know?"

"No, really, I don't know—won't you explain?"

The Dominie's face was filled with wonder at the girl's speech.

"Not till the surgeons get here?" cried the girl.

"Is any one wounded?" asked the Dominie.

He gave it up when the three laughed again in great glee.

"I love to hear you all chortle so merri-lee," the Dominie added as he smiled in content, "laughter and youth go hand in hand."

"But the outlaw? We must hear more of your intentions as to the outlaw," cried Carrie.

"It's not so much our intentions as to him, as his intentions as to us," replied Wink. "Outlaws have a queer habit of killing you first, and explaining things to you afterward."

"True indeed," replied the girl.

"But Carrie, what a foolish remark. How could you explain anything to a dead man?"

"Or to some living ones?" put in Ford.

The remark caused a general smile again.

The Dominie having subsided Wink continued.

"I think if I were you I would not dare to remain in these woods in spite of your graceful way of poking fun at us," Wink added. "Furneaux, the outlaw is not an easy man to deal with. It's positively dangerous for you to be out here with only that aged clergyman as your guard."

Carrie was grave in a moment.

"Do not think that I do not take your warning in good part," she replied. "We may jest to keep away fear, sometimes. I'm not overlooking the fact that if Furneaux the outlaw is about we are in danger."

The bull-dog at this point made a frantic tug at his twisted-hair rope leash.

He gave a deep, full throated growl.

A shot rang through the forest.

The horse Dominie Scattergood was riding gave a great plunging leap.

He came down on his knees.

The Dominie was pitched over the animal's head as it fell and died.

"The outlaws!" shouted Ford as his rifle sprang to his shoulder with the word.

The weapon, a fine repeating heavy caliber gun, began pouring out its hail of shot at advancing shadowy forms, stealing through the forest on all sides.

Wink pulled Carrie's horse around toward the place from whence he and Ford had just come.

He motioned to Ford to take Dominie Scattergood up behind him.

Wink then turned to assist Carrie.

"Ride fast, girl; if you are not ready to die!" the gallant fellow shouted.

With the ringing shots from the outlaws cutting the bushes about them, to which they replied with many answering shots, the beleaguered party dashed onward in a race for safety.

The outlaws trailed behind them. The fierce oaths of the bandits could be heard as they urged their horses forward.

The outlaws lived in the forest merely because they were proscribed to the haunts of vicious men.

Thus they had no knowledge of woodcraft, and no wish to learn.

They were good shots in the open, none better; but in the half light, half darkness of the forest with the infinite spaces, and dense undergrowth, with shifting winds that made the direction of a bullet one of expert knowledge of conditions, firing at a party of people plunging this way and that under the direction of an expert woodsman, who never left a settled mark for a second any where among his charges, spoiled what was thought to be a sure victory for the outlaws in advance of the undertaking.

"Don't you let them escape," howled Furneaux, who was fiercely angry. "You have 'em, boys. Rush 'em!"

Furneaux himself led the van of the charge. He was mounted on his big black horse while behind him, only a jump in the rear, came Club Foot George, now in the saddle of the led horse owned by Furneaux, but every inch a man when mounted; club-foot or no club-foot; he was on horseback as good as any man who was not his better.

"Thar they goes," Club Foot George shrieked. "Kill 'em all ef ye can. That gal's wuss nor them men. She's the daughter o' a rich man. Kill her fust!"

Carrie heard the howls of Club Foot George and she sat down on her horse and rode him hard.

The girl made a picture as her golden hair became unbound and covered her to her waist in its golden glory.

Behind her rushed Wink Stone, as calm and smiling as a summer day.

He directed the way by voice and gesture.

First he would twist down a long corridor-like space between many trees only to whirl suddenly to the left and then go rushing away a few hundred feet in a rocky space, and then would dart down some other unknown passageway.

This made a merry chase for the outlaws.

"When we reach the top of this hill," cried Wink after a sudden turn, "every one may walk their horses."

Carrie gave him a look.

She could hardly understand what the young mail rider

It seemed to her foolhardy to stop horses and descend into a walk even if the outlaws' shrieks and cries could now only be heard faintly.

"You are sure that order is wise?" she asked of Wink.

He laughed a trifle grimly.

"I don't give orders unless I know thy are wise," he replied. "Any fool can give orders. It requires a wise man to give an order that will stand."

"Yes," returned the girl, "and a very firm man that does not change an order after it is given."

"In this case, we will see," Wink rejoined. "I feel sure that we can win by my order, better than if we continued this headlong pace which is killing to our horses and could not last forever."

Carrie nodded.

"The bandits being better mounted than we, that is having more mounted men, could finally overtake us for among their numbers they would undoubtedly have a horse that finally would be fresher than ours."

"That's the way I figure it," answered Wink.

He turned to Ned Ford who was running along by his

CHAPTER V.

THE HAUNTED CABIN.

In the first few hundred yards of the desperate flight of the girl, Carrie Denton, her tutor, Abner Scattergood, Ned Ford, the Royal North-West Mounted Policeman and Wink Stone, the pace was a fiercely fast one.

The outlaws were in such hot pursuit and they seemed to be in such numbers that their shots ought to have cut the fleeing party into ribbons.

But the bandits were handicapped by the woods and verdure upon the trees.

Wink Stone had been for years in and around the hamlet of Constable. He knew the woods better than the outlaws ever would know them.

Wink knew the forest because he loved it and in all his spare time lived in it.

horse's side, with his arm over the saddle, while on the horse sat Dominie Scattergood.

"Ease up, Ned," Wink cried. "We are safe—for awhile at least."

The party now came to a halt.

The horses stretched their necks willingly as they had been coming on at foaming speed; the lather on the animal's sides told how strenuous the pace had been.

Wink led the way now.

He walked his horse directly at a wonderful tangle of trees, shrubs, rocky bits of hilly surfaces, that stretched away apparently into fathomless distances.

The way was so inaccessible that even Ford began to doubt the sanity of Wink.

"Where are you going, Wink?" he said.

Wink only replied by pointing toward the apparently impenetrable thicket and woods.

"You don't expect to get through there, do you?" Ford cried. "Man, a mouse couldn't get through there."

No reply came from Wink.

But his horse was not turned from the direction in which it was heading when Ford first spoke.

Even Dominie Scattergood decided to speak. He had been extremely silent so far on the terrible journey to escape the outlaws.

"I would, ah, suggest, don't, chew know, Mister Wink, that you ah, aw rwather impeded ou-ah chawnces of ah, escape by your ah, untoward attempt to ah, battah down that forrest ahead, into which no horse possibly could penetrate. We will find, this ah, to be so and when we wish to retrace ouah steps, the outlaws, ah, will have cut off ouah egress, ah."

"No question but that is so—if we try to retrace our steps," cried Wink.

As he spoke he advanced directly at a wonderfully large tree that stood in his path.

"Look out! You'll run into the tree," whispered Carrie.

But straight at the tree went Wink.

Just as Ford was about to grasp Wink's bridle rein, thinking that the mail rider had been suddenly taken with a fit of insanity, Wink rounded the tree, struck his horse with one of his spurs and as the animal jumped into a lope in North-West style without the preliminary trot, went prancing along down a wide grassy spot, easily twenty feet wide, and which lead in a sort of circle.

The crowd followed him now thoroughly sure that Wink was sane.

"Isn't this great?" cried Carrie. "Why, this is a beautiful spot. Hear the birds sing over our heads! How the broad, splendid maples intertwine over our heads! This trail, is a dream of green turf—how did you know of it?"

"I knew," replied Wink. "There's many a secret buried in these primeval forests."

The two could hear the thud of the rushing horse carrying Ford and Dominie Scattergood right behind them.

The going was so easy that the big bay horse that Ford owned had no difficulty in following after the two more lightly weighted animals, even if the pace had been modulated to the double load Ford's beast was carrying.

Wink held up his hand.

He at the time stopped his horse.

Ford, who saw the signaling hand of his friend, also pulled up.

"I want you two to stand underneath this tree," Wink said to Ford and the Dominie. "But no matter who approaches don't shoot without a challenge."

"How shall I challenge?" asked Ford.

"Halt!" said Wink.

"If who ever comes does not halt—what then?"

"Shoot."

With this remark Wink and Carrie dashed ahead leaving the Dominie and Ford as a rear guard to receive the outlaws should they follow them to the retreat.

Twenty feet away from where Ford and the Dominie stood under a tree Carrie looked back.

She gave a cry as she rubbed her eyes.

"Why were are Ford and the Dominie?" she asked in surprise. "They were here in plain view not three seconds ago. Now they are gone."

Wink smiled slightly.

"Stand here a moment," he said.

The girl did as she was directed.

"Now shut your eyes," commanded Wink. "That's right, let your horse have his head. He wont do anything but graze."

The girl shut her eyes.

"When I say 'begin' count twenty slowly, this way, one, two, three, and so on."

"Very good. Then what?" queried the girl.

"When you have counted twenty open your eyes."

The girl looked around before she complied.

The same fringing row of trees shut out the gaze from the forest.

The trees further marked the trail-like space between the two rows.

Carrie saw Wink seated on his horse not three feet it seemed to her from her steed.

"Begin!" shouted Wink.

Carrie began counting.

When she said, "twenty" she opened her eyes.

She was alone!

In the brief time that it took her to begin counting at one and to end at twenty, Wink Stone had utterly disappeared, although the girl well knew that he had been directly in front of her not three feet away in the time it took her to make her count.

Carrie gasped.

There was something uncanny and ghost-like about the entire performance.

"What can it mean," the girl said. "How can a man, no pigmy man, but a big man, mounted on a horse that is no Shetland pony, but a big horse, suddenly disappear into nothingness?"

Carrie looked backward.

Then she looked forward.

She stared at the right and then at the left.

In no direction could be seen Wink Stone.

The girl felt her heart almost stop beating.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "Is this a ghostly den? Can a man and a horse vanish like that?"

A voice smote upon her ear.

She almost tumbled off of her horse.

There, coming down at a fast lope from the apparently impenetrable underbrush that marked the left of where she stood, was Wink.

He was smiling as he came along.

The girl stared at him vaguely.

"What kind of a place is this?" she asked. "It is haunted?"

"Hush!" whispered Wink. "Ride fast!"

He spurred his horse as he spoke.

Carrie followed after Wink in a mechanical fashion.

They had not gone but a short distance, after the girl had been told to follow the young man, when a cry escaped her.

"Look!" she said. "See? There are two men there beside the road."

Wink did not stop after she had spoken so Carrie rushed after him.

"Why there are two men there ahead of us!" added Carrie. "Why it's the same men I saw before—it's the Dominie and Ford. How did they come here?"

Wink did not answer.

"They were told not to move, yet here they are right ahead in our path, and we have not retraced our steps since we left them," the girl exclaimed.

Carrie addressed the same questions to the Dominie a few seconds later.

"Why did you move?" she asked of him.

"We haven't moved. We obeyed orders and remained right here. What do you ah, mean?"

When the Dominie had thus replied Carrie was puzzled.

She turned to Wink for an explanation.

When she did so her gaze fell upon a cabin, rudely constructed of logs, which stood apparently only a few hundred feet away.

"Where did that cabin come from?" the girl asked in a trembling tone. "It was not here a few moments ago. I know that it was not because I looked in every direction and saw nothing but the forest. Wink Stone, tell me about that cabin!"

"That cabin," cried Stone in a deep voice, "is a haunted cabin. The grounds you are in are known as the haunted grounds surrounding the cabin of mystery."

Leading the way, the entire party soon reached the cabin.

Suspended on a tree they saw hanging the skeleton of a man.

The fleshless bones of the head, the dark caverns where eyes were once flashing with happiness or anger, stood out under their eyes until their flesh crept in horror. The skeleton appeared to have a grin upon its face. The sightless eye sockets were turned toward something that was hidden in the doorway of the cabin in a deep shadow.

Wink jumped back in fear.

A second skeleton hand was aiming a revolver at his head, from the doorway.

As Wink Stone dodged, the revolver aimed at him by the skeleton was exploded.

a clump of trees that stood in a spot that years before had been the center of a clearing.

A lightning blasted pine tree stood in the center of the cleared spot which Club Foot George saw was one of those desolate places that sometimes are to be found in great forests where a fire has stopped the growth of everything for hundreds of years it seemed.

The cleared spot in its center held a marshy place, where toads, frogs, serpents, and water rats held high carnival.

Even Club Foot George, to whom fear was almost an alien feeling, shuddered at the spectral loneliness of the scene before him.

Furneaux himself, came quickly to where Club Foot George stood.

He was anxious and showed it.

"They have disappeared," he replied to the words of George. "Has the earth swallowed them up?"

The look on George's face caused the outlaw chief to ask hurriedly if he was ill.

"Naw. Notin' th' matter, 'cept I'd like ter know whar them people Wink Stone, Ford, and thet gal and the old geezer, her too-ter went ter."

"So would I," replied Furneaux. "Now, you men, search the woods about here! Shout for me if you see any trail of the missing party."

The remainder of the outlaws, some ten in number scattered at their chief's command.

"Now then," said Furneaux to Club Foot George, "what's the matter?"

"Nawthin," replied George " 'cept I don' see whar them people got ter."

"You gave the alarm that they were coming back near our camp. Now tell me all that you saw. I was in such a hurry to catch the party that I have not had a chance to see you or talk to you before."

Club Foot George swore a mighty oath.

"Et was me dawg," the outlaw replied. "They has me dawg, Bull. I miss him wen I shot up the Dew Drop Inn. They has him shore."

Furneaux opened his eyes very wide.

"Your dog?" he cried. "In the name of all that's wonderful what has your dog got to do with the party we have lost track of?"

Club Foot George swore again.

"Thet thar feller Wink Stone, hez pinched me dawg en he's made the dawg scent me out hyar. Thet dawg 'ud foller me ter the hot place but he'd fin' me. See?"

Furneaux was no fool.

He saw.

"That Wink Stone is a man after my heart's desire," Furneaux cried. "I wish I had a man like that in my band—why he has brains and knows how to get to things. That's the best plan I ever heard of. No way on earth could he have found us if it hadn't been for your dog. Bull is the best detective I ever heard of."

Club Foot George was able to dig up a couple of new oaths that fitted the situation.

"I'm sure that I have trouble ahead," added Furneaux darkly, "now that I see how things are coming as to this dog of yours. A man who has the head on him to make the dog of Club Foot George lead him to you, is some man. I'm sorry, but one of us has got to cash in. There isn't room in the North-West for Wink Stone and me."

"They hez me pup yit," cried Club Foot George.

CHAPTER VI.

BAFFLED BANDITS.

"Whar did they's git ter?" yelled Club Foot George, as he came at a swift run on his rangey horse around

"Thet's wots eatin' me. Then—wall—I'll tell yah all erbout ut."

"Good. Go on."

"Wall, I was on watch fer them critters, fer I knaws that thar Wink Stone an' he's some fitin' man. I sez ter meself thet he sees me an' warns me thet a 'tarnal Mounted Police-mun was down ter me house at Poker Flat arter me. I had the heart ter kill him then, an' w'y I didn't do him then I can't say. Arter Wink warns me he teks ter the town o' Constable on his big hoss, fer I meets 'im on the trail whar he rides wit der mail. An' I knaws he sees me a jumpin' fer these yar woods arter he warns me."

"He did eh? Then he knew which way you were going?"

"Ev course. He sees me taken to de woods right in this hyar de-rection. Wen he gits ter Constable uv cose he larns ter oncet thet I'd shot up that thar gin-mill an' pulled off the robbery thar as well as et the post-office. So, he jest nat'lly wen he gits my dawg hustles hyar in the woods whar he seen me a hiking and puts me own dawg on me trail, and me own dawg by"—here the outlaw forgot everything but his troubles and he "cussed" those troubles out in such a hearty fashion as to cause much merriment to Furneaux the grim leader.

"Club Foot George," cried Furneaux, "you're a wonder. A dead wonder. If I could swear like you, I'd never do anything else but swear. You could make a fortune over in Yukon territory just swearing at mules. One mule when he heard you swear could pull out twice the load as any mule you don't swear at. You are the sweetest 'cusser' in my band."

Even Club Foot George could not help laughing when Furneaux had finished.

"Howdye like ter have yar own dawg put on yer trail ter do you up? That thar dawg has ben fed by no one but me sense he was bawn, and wots wuss my Injun woman, she hez all erlong said thet dawg otter not be raised by me an' thet someday he'd git me inter trouble."

"Oh, what of that?"

"Nawthin. But ye ain't married are ye?"

"No," replied Furneaux. "Then ye don't know wot a wimmin critter wull do wen she gits a 'chanst ter git back and say 'I tole yah so.'"

Again Furneaux laughed.

"I see your Indian wife has not forgotten the White wives' prerogative of scolding? But in this case it was a natural thing for you to have a dog. Club Foot George there's a type of man that can't live without a dog, just as there's the type that hates dogs. If we all liked dogs there probably wouldn't be enough to go around."

"That's so. Wall, ter git ahead with me story. I was a lookin' eout fer Wink wit both me eyes. Then I hearn the yelp o' Bull a comin' outen thar woods. I knaws in er flash thet they'd git hyar led by me own pup, en I raises a howl."

"The howl reaching my ears I raised the gang and we attacked the party which fled at our approach like the startled fawn when the wild-cat lurks and slinks behind it."

"Yass. Thet feller Wink Stone knew he had no chanst again our party. Se he 'ustles like mad erway frum us. They gits the better o' the dash fer life at thet. Whar are they's?"

"It's mysterious, truly, what become of them," Furneaux replied. "I saw them rush down a long lane-like space in the forest back there. I hurried after and came directly to this spot. I can't see what happened to them, can you?"

Club Foot George looked fearfully around him.

"Say," he said in a low tone. "Thez en old hunter thet I met oncet who knows these woods like some men knaws a book."

"Yes?"

Club Foot George crept nearer.

"Say, Cap'n," he whispered, "that thar hunter tells me thar uz a hanted cabin, about hyar."

"A what?"

"A hanted cabin."

"You mean a haunted cabin?"

"Shore. That thar cabin the hunter says, is filled wit skeletons. He sez that these hyar skeletons shoot at ye ef ye right smart tries ter git into the cabin."

"Shoot at you? Dead men, now only mere skeletons, shoot at you? Man, you're right plumb locoed."

"Naw I ain locoed. My brains is all right. That thar hunter showed me a bull-et wound through his shoulder. He sez wen he happens ter git to the hanted cabin oncet, thar was a skeleton standin' et the door. Thar was another big feller hangin' ter a tree by his neck, an' he says, sez he, thar was trouble he sees, a comin' to 'im ter oncet, fer one o' the spooks was a grinnin' en a lookin' et 'tother feller standin' in the door o' the cabin wit a re-volver in his hans'!"

"Yes. What happened then?"

"Thet thar gun went offen an' hit thet feller in the shoulder."

"A skeleton fires a gun and hits a man in the shoulder? Say, you're out of your head, George, alright."

"No I am not. I'm er tellin' ye the flat sober trooth. I know thet thar skeleton fired the gun."

"How?"

"Because I seen the scar of the bullet."

Furneaux roared his glee to the atmosphere.

"What do you think of that?" he cried weakly after much laughter. "George knew the skeleton fired the shot because he saw the healed up scar the skeleton's bullet made."

"Oa, laugh ef ye wanters ter. But ets so."

"Don't you see that skeletons are strange that don't shoot a skeleton bullet? If a ghost is a spook why does he shoot live men's bullets? Boy, your story falls down of its own weight. I don't believe you."

"Do as ye please. Say, Cap'n why don't you try ter fin' the cabin? Thet's a proof of the eatin' ov that thar puddin'. Ef they aint ghosts thet shoot at live folks erbout thet hanted cabin, then my feller wot tell me that story is liar fer fair."

"Did you ever see the spook place?"

"Naw."

"Do you know how to get to it?"

"Naw."

"Then what's the use of talking about getting to the haunted cabin?"

Before Club Foot George could answer, several of the outlaw band were to be seen eagerly riding toward Furneaux.

"News Cap'n," cried the leader, Shorty Adams, a stout, happy little chap, with a gun-powder temper that he backed up by quick gun-play.

"Well, tell it," replied Furneaux.

"We've seen the tracks of them people we are after."
 "Good," rejoined Furneaux. "Where were they?"
 "They's led ter that thar clump o' trees," cried Shorty. "Thar they don't go no furdur."

"They don't—what?" yelled Furneaux.

"They don't go no furdur," repeated Shorty.

Furneaux leaped on his horse and drifted like a figure of rage across the space that separated him from Shorty and where the bandits were standing in a group curiously looking at plain tracks of a party of three horses, and the funny little steps printed in the soft earth by the running feet of a dog.

"Hyar Cap'n," cried The Rat, a tall half-breed Indian.

Furneaux looked in the indicated direction.

He saw the tracks plainly.

His eyes glanced back toward the woods across the clearing.

Furneaux saw how it was.

The tracks were unmistakable until they reached the blasted tree in the center of the clearing.

There they were fainter but they skirted a marsh.

Next they came directly toward the great rocky hill, covered with a wild tangle of impenetrable shrubbery, it seemed to Furneaux' careful brooding eye.

"There the tracks vanish," cried the outlaw. "It doesn't look to me as if they could go further in that direction. But let us see—who can tell—hum?"

With these words Furneaux turned to Shorty Adams, who with Club Foot George had now joined the party, and sent him back on the trail for the purpose of reporting all its deviations from a straight line.

"I want to see if the deviation was due to trying to avoid our shots by jumping about a lot, or was part of a plan," Furneaux said to himself.

As Shorty departed, Furneaux turned to Club Foot George.

"You take two men," he commanded, "and go across this clearing. Examine it from all points and see just what you do see. Report to me whether the party could have escaped by making a blind trail of this, and then jumping to the other side, and then away to freedom."

Club Foot George hurried off on his mission.

"Now then," said Furneaux to The Rat, the half-breed Sioux Indian, "we will leave the rest of the gang here as a reserve force and we will go together up to those mysterious woods where the tracks seem to disappear, and we will try and see whether they did disappear, or whether they went through the woods beyond."

Furneaux certainly showed generalship.

His disposition of his forces meant that he would look over the country on the find-a-needle-in-a-hay-mow principle; it is hard but it can be done.

The Rat, proud to be selected by the Cap'n for a duty of this kind, ran on a few feet in advance of his commander to see all he could, in hopes that his zeal would be appreciated in a monetary way, which after all is the true reward that zeal ought to have.

Furneaux made the best speed he could after his zealous underling.

They reached the fringe of underbrush without accident.

Then Furneaux saw a long, over-hanging maple limb from a great tree in his path.

He stooped to grasp it.

As he did so there belched forth the bellow of a fire-arm.

A sheet of orange, purple, yellow, and green flame at the same time flashed in a wide canopy before him.

The flash blinded Furneaux.

He had a fleeting glimpse of a tall form, which as he looked seemed to become a grinning skeleton with a rifle poised at its shoulder.

Furneaux heard then a terrible scream from the lips of the Rat.

Furneaux felt himself torn from his feet by a dreadful gust of wind, again he saw the canopy of flame, and then he sank down, down, into a sea of nothingness while the staggering figure of The Rat quivered before his eyes, as it weaved back and forth, and he felt sure that he heard an eerie whistling shriek issue from the skinless throat of the skeleton.

CHAPTER VII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Wink Stone escaped instant death by the narrowest fraction of a second.

The bullet fired at him from the skeleton hand that was raised as if the sightless long vanished eyes of the creature before him had come back into the dead head, and had taken aim and fired at the disturber of its home, went whistling over Wink's head in the second that he had dodged the flame of the shot.

But the fact is that no man can see a skeleton fire at him from a huge revolver at point-blank range without being somewhat disturbed.

Wink staggered back as Carrie Denton's shriek of amazement rang out.

The girl's cry and the shot brought Ned Ford and the Dominie on the run to see what was the matter.

"God bless my soul!" cried Dominie Scattergood. "Look at that skeleton!"

The skeleton that had fired the shot at Wink was then seen to drop the revolver from his right hand.

Then it lifted the fleshless hand to its head, and instead of removing its hat, which it did not have, the hat, like its flesh, having long before become food for worms, *took off its head.*

The skeleton made a low bow with its head, and then took off its arm which with its head it threw back into the cabin.

The ghostly form now was standing on one leg like a stork.

Joint by joint, limb by limb, bone by bone, the skeleton steadily unjointed itself, and threw itself, so as to write, back into the cabin.

When nothing but its back-bone was left the figure crumpled into a heap and tumbled to the floor of the cabin with a ghostly tinkle.

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated the Dominie.

When the ghost took off its head and bowed; the Dominie not to be outdone in politeness by ghost or skeleton, or live or dead man, had also removed his hat, not being able to remove his head, and had bowed in great politeness to the grinning skeleton.

But when the skeleton quickly began to take himself apart and to throw himself back into the interior of the cabin the amaze of the Dominie was shown in the expression he only used when thoroughly dismayed.

As for Carrie, she was frightened half out of her wits.

But she made no effort to run away showing that one can be frightened and not flee from fear.

Ned Ford had pulled his weapon from its holster and was prepared to fight it out with ghostly or healthy people, when Carrie's sense of humor came to her rescue.

She laughed until she could laugh no more.

It seemed utterly ridiculous that a healthy phantom could so gravely, right before her, take off his head, use it as a hat with which to bow at her, and then toss it away from him, to be followed by almost all the rest of his bones.

The girl's cries caused Wink to grin.

Ned Ford joined in the joy-fest.

But the Dominie?

"Got bless my *soul*!" he trilled. "What a *damned* polite skeleton that was."

This was the only time that the Dominie had ever been known to approach profane language.

The Dominie saw that his excitement had mixed him and he tried to straighten up the matter by a further remark.

"I don't mean damned skeleton," he cried, "I mean that skeleton of the damned!"

This was worse than the original remark, because, while it was up to the schedule of the Dominie's views, it often isn't wise to press some views upon a miscellaneous audience, which may contain people who differ from you.

"As to whether it's a skeleton damned, or a damned skeleton, we won't argue," dryly replied Wink. "What we will do, however, is to try and find how we are first frightened by one skeleton, then shot at by another who escapes the penalty of his misdeed by unjoining himself before our eyes."

"Wouldn't that be a great game for some of the prison birds I have to chase up and down the wild North-West!" cried Ned Ford. "Say, I'd never get a man if my jail-birds could fly off as easily as the skeleton we just saw quit the game."

"I don't know how it was done but it made my flesh creep," cried Carrie. "I never saw anything quite so horribly uncanny in my life."

"Nor I either," cried Wink. "What is worse I don't understand it at all. Now I have been told all my life that there was no such things as ghosts. I don't think there ever were any such things. I don't believe in ghosts, and I am going to stick to my belief until I'm sure I'm wrong. So, I figure that there's an element of mystery here which I'm going to solve."

"Do you suppose the bandits are at the bottom of this mystery?" said Carrie.

"I dunno," cried Wink. "You can't prove anything by me."

By this time the Dominie had got pretty well caught up in the line of conversation.

He had allowed the fact of the mysterious vanishing dance of the ghost-like skeleton to percolate into all the corners of his brain.

He had then chased a few feet behind, but still in

the running all that Ned, Wink and Carrie had been saying and now he came in at the death with a remark of his own.

"I hear cries, men's voices talking, fierce oaths, and——" said the Dominie.

The party had been so busily engaged in listening to their own conversation that they had almost forgotten that a band of fierce outlaws lurked outside of their temporary refuge awaiting them to kill them.

The words of the Dominie were sufficient to bring back to each one in the beleaguered party a sense of their danger.

"I'd rather stand up and let twenty skeletons take snap-shots at me with guns," said Wink, "than have to face one shot sent at me by Furneaux the outlaw."

"The ghosts here are rather friendly at that, compared to that gang out there," dryly put in Ford.

"It seems to me that we might engineer a scheme—say, I've got a plan," added Wink. "It's a good plan at that. By George and the dragon, I'll try it!"

"What's your plan?" asked Ford briefly.

"You come here and I'll tell you," replied Wink as he beckoned to his friend, "while Carrie here tries to get the Dominie to know where he is and what we are all doing."

Carrie accordingly with mental foot notes and an imaginary chart, managed to get through the Dominie's hair some of the facts that had transpired since they were attacked by outlaws.

Wink and Ned, thus left alone, managed to get to the pith of their condition quickly.

"You hear the outlaws of course?" asked Wink.

"Yes. I'm not deaf," rejoined Ford.

"Come here, then."

Wink pulled Ford gently to where the trees were so loosely growing together that they made a perfect shield from even ten feet beyond them.

Wink pulled the screen of leaves aside with great caution.

Ford looked through carefully.

What he saw made him jump back quickly and shut the leaves down so as to again form the screen.

"Why that outlaw chief, Furneaux, was not twenty feet from me," said Ford, with his eyes bulging.

"What kind of a place is this?"

Wink laughed.

"Isn't it the devil's own joint? The queer thing to me is that the outlaws did not hear me talking awhile ago, Carrie laughing, the Dominie speaking and you growling away in your deep basso profundo voice, to say nothing of the shot I heard ring out as the ghostly skeleton tried to add me to its grave-yard."

"That's right. But we'd better talk in whispers. How far off was the bandit when I saw him there?"

"Further than you'd fancy. We are on a hill, and he is at the foot of it, several hundred feet apart."

"But Furneaux looked as if he was right at my hand," cried Ford. "It looked that way, but then you know where you are. I don't. I guess I don't want to with all these shootin' skeletons about one."

"Well, but what of Furneaux?"

"What of him? Say, I'd like to catch him. It would be a great feather in my cap if I could."

"I think you can, at that."

"You tell me how and I'm with you."

"My plan is—say, how much gunpowder have you with you?"

"This flask full, three more flasks on my horse, tied in my saddle-kit—oh, perhaps four or five pounds."

"I've got three pounds—that's enough."

"What's powder got to do with trapping the outlaw Furneaux?"

"You go and get the skeleton chap tied to yonder tree. The other fellow in the door threw himself away so we can't use him."

"Get the skeleton hanging to the tree? Not much!"

"Why not?"

"He might be a shooting skeleton."

"Nonsense. He has no gun in his fleshless hand. He can't shoot off even his mouth for he has nothing left but his jaw bones and his teeth where his lips used to hang."

"I know, but there's many a ghost that can mow and gibber at one, and I don't want to see a confounded skeleton gnashing his teeth at me."

Wink sneered.

"Oh, say," he cried, "you're a fine policeman!"

"That's it. I'm a policeman all right, but not a ghostly one. I'll tackle anything up to a certain point—the ghostly gents aren't named in any of my warrants."

But as he spoke Ford hurried toward the hanging skeleton although he had spoken half in jest half in earnest at that.

He approached the skeleton with care.

He had experience in trick skeletons twice before this day.

He had seen this particular chap indicate a nice place to have one's head blown to bits by a second skeleton, and he hadn't much confidence in the good intentions of the skeleton he was asked to detach from its perch.

So Ford circled round the hanging form.

Like a skeleton doing an unearthly dance, the white thing swung around as did Ford, keeping its ghastly grinning face turned toward the young man, who was now thoroughly frightened.

Ford retraced his steps.

He began now to move in a circle directly opposite to his original one.

The skeleton calmly reversed itself and swung the other way, thus keeping its face still turned toward Ford.

"What d'ye think of this chap?" Ford asked, "No matter which way I come at him he keeps his blooming face turned toward me as if I was a thief and needed watching."

Wink who had drawn near to watch the strange sight spoke up.

"Well, do you blame the chap?" he asked. "When he was alive he probably knew that with the average policeman the better thing to do was to keep your face toward him, or he might graft all your cash out of your pockets, when your back was turned."

"Shall we get this chap down, or will you let him swing for a while? He seems to have been hanged up by the middle of his back and that looks to me to be like an uncomfortable position, for man or skeleton."

"Well, we might loosen him so that he might rest his back. From his ancient looks and old smell I should say he had been hanging here for some time."

The two men at length started to unfasten the skeleton.

They had no trouble in doing so.

A steel chain fastened about the waist of the skele-

ton was riveted in a staple that had been driven into the tree.

The chain was so old that it shivered almost at a touch.

The skeleton hung together, however, and Wink stretched it on the ground where it lay white and sepulchral on the green turf.

But there was a wonderful discovery made when the skeleton was removed.

There hung a square block of wood.

The wood was about six inches long and about ten inches wide, which gave it an out of proportion look that would, Wink said, "cause any one's gaze to be riveted upon it from its shape alone," as soon as the skeleton was removed.

"Then the bit of wood was put there to be seen?" questioned Ford.

"Undoubtedly."

"By whom?"

"I don't know."

"Can you imagine?"

"Hardly."

"Did you know anything about this place before you steered us here?"

"Yes and no."

"That is a double-barreled answer, so please translate it."

"I knew something about this place, but not much."

"Oh. What did you really know?"

"It has been a tradition in all the great North-West that the celebrated sea-pirate and rover Morgan, had hid the greater part of his loot in the North-West forest."

"You mean the Buccaneer of the Spanish Main, John Morgan?"

"I do."

"He whose fame was world wide, and who led the greatest body of sea robbers the world has ever known?"

"Yes."

"Do you think this haunted place is where he buried his treasure?"

"I don't know anything about it. I only know that all over the North-West any old hunter tells you the story of John Morgan's buried gold and his haunted cabin, where ghosts, and skeletons shoot at you—some men claim that they have tried to penetrate these mysteries, and have been wounded by skeletons."

"Oh, well you just escaped death at the hands of one. You therefore know that much of the stories is true."

"I do."

"So you tried to get here among those skeletons to escape that infernal living terror Furneaux?"

"I did. I was told some years ago that there was a way of escaping most any enemy that might attack you hereabouts by rushing toward what is known as the 'blasted tree' in the center of a swamp. I was then going to be rewarded, the stories said, by a labyrinth of avenues, through some of which I could easily escape."

"Then you knew nothing definite as you hurried toward this spot when we were being chased by the outlaws?"

"Nothing but what I've told you. I took a chance. The chance won out."

"Well it was *The Mail Rider's Dash With Death*, all right."

"Wasn't it? I was only just about six good jumps ahead of Furneaux, the bandit who had made his brags that he would kill me, when we got in this haven."

"Then there was the Club Foot George, the *Desperado of Poker Flat*, well he was in the running—it certainly was a narrow space in which to figure one's self out of. An error in judgment would have ended in our deaths."

"There wasn't any chance for judgment in this matter. We were sure to be caught if we continued on as we were doing?"

"That's right."

"We therefore had the only possible chance to get away in taking the one we did."

"Well, that's true."

"So we played the only chance in sight and won out."

"Glory be——" said Ford.

Wink laughed again.

"Now then, we'll play in another chance," he cried.

"You get that skeleton. Hoist him up on your shoulder. He's only a dead thing now. Darn it man, are you afraid? Dead men aren't dangerous. It's the living we have to fear."

Ford soon had the skeleton on his shoulder, its head grinning behind his, and its bony legs and remains of its feet sticking out like a sign board on a country road.

"Whither way?" Ford cried impatiently.

"What in the world are you going to do with that skeleton? Bury it?" cried Carrie who had now returned with the Dominie who watched the scene with a puzzled air.

"Come on," cried Wink. "Never mind the horses or Club Foot George's dog. I've made the dog look thinner any way, but George wont care. The dog is the better for the run he has had, eh?"

"Exactly," said Carrie, "and we are the better of his master by our run, eh?"

"Stop talking for six minutes and get your weapons ready," replied Wink.

"What a very arbitrary young man you are," the girl replied, but she pulled out her revolver and examined it carefully.

So did all the others and there was a fierce bristling of weapons that showed the party knew their danger and proposed to defend their place of safety to the last ditch.

"Well?" asked Carrie of Wink as they strode along having tied their horses to a tree near the cabin, along with the dog.

"Well what?" said Wink.

"Have you nothing to say to me?"

"But what shall I say?"

"Aren't you going to tell me as to your plan?"

"It's simple."

"What is it?"

"It's simple."

"But that isn't telling me anything about it."

"I know it isn't."

"Aren't you going to tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"Of your plan."

"Yes."

"When?"

"Almost immediately."

"Why not now?"

"I'd rather wait until I execute the plan. Then I'll tell you all about it."

"What a provoking man. Well, I never could make a man see things from my view point."

"Of course not. You remind me of the woman that tried to make a squash grow up into onions."

"I see the application. Well, you are an onion-like man, nothing about you but an onion-y look, at that. I'll go over to Ford and bother him."

"All right. Don't make love to the skeleton he is carrying?"

"Why not?"

"Because the skeleton might take you seriously."

"You don't?"

"Oh, not at all."

"Thank you, Mister Stone!"

"Miss Denton, you are entirely welcome."

Carrie ran ahead with Ford and, half in jest and somewhat in temper, asked him if he knew anything about the plans of Wink.

"Oh, yes," cheerfully replied Ford, "he was good enough to tell me of them."

"Isn't that nice? Now you will tell me?"

"Oh, no. You'll have to go to Wink for explanation."

"Has he the foot-notes, the diagram, the blueprint and all that sort of thing of the plan he has?"

"Don't think he needs one. It's very simple."

"So he told me."

Carrie then switched over to talk to the Dominie again.

Soon Wink beckoned to her.

When she had reached his side he asked her to take a position near him and where he could be sure that she was safe.

"There may be some smart bullet work here," Wink explained, "and I'd like to take you home to your dad alive, if I could."

"Thank you," rejoined Carrie, "I'd much rather go home alive and not dead. That would be my preference if your plan, Mr. Stone, is to allow me to live."

"Now that you are set," replied Wink, "I'll tell you the plan. I'm going to try to kill Furneaux, the outlaw."

Before the girl could reply, she saw Ford hoisting the skeleton alongside of a sapling to which he tied the grewsome object.

Then he sprinkled something black all around the skeleton.

"What's he sprinkling there?" cried the girl.

"Powder," answered Wink, "come over here Dominie, and get ready to scrooch if the bullets come this way."

"Look out, Stone, here they come," cried Ford.

Stone left the Dominie and Carrie with a whispered injunction to bend as near the earth as possible to escape any shot that might be fired.

"Let her go!" Wink cried to Ford.

There was a match soon glittering in Ford's hand.

It was laid on a tiny line of powder that ran back to the greater mass sprinkled about the skeleton.

Carrie saw as if in a dream the fiery line run backward.

She saw the fierce face of Furneaux and an Indian half-breed come running from nowhere, then there was

a startling "woof!" the powder ignited and gave out a sheet of flame, through which rang the shot of a rifle.

Then Ford darted forward and she saw him returning dragging a prostrate insensible man, while another laid still outside the leafy bower which was now closed again.

"This way, hurry," she heard the voice of Wink cry. Somehow she was standing by the side of her horse and Wink was trying to help her to mount.

She mounted quickly.

The Dominie and Ford, she was sure, were strapping a gagged and blindfolded man on the horse of Ford.

She was, however, hurried forward by a gesture of Wink's and soon she was by his side, eager to learn what had happened.

"Who is that man you have gagged and bound now back there?" she questioned.

"That? Oh, that's Furneaux the outlaw. My plan was to capture him."

"You have."

Wink nodded.

"Don't stop to talk," Wink urged, "ride fast!"

Carrie could hear the growls of the bull dog who was being led away from his master.

CHAPTER VIII.

SURPRISED OUTLAWS.

Club Foot George came charging over in the direction of the shot, when it boomed over the cleared spot, and died away in echoes in the forest beyond.

Shorty Adams in turn came bounding also to the spot.

"Who fired that shot?" yelled Club Foot George.

"Twant me," shouted Adams. "Whar's the Cap'n?"

"I dunno. Ain't he thar?"

"Naw."

"He must be. Oh, Cap'n!"

Both outlaws paused to listen.

There was no sound save for the running feet of the other members of the band trying in haste to reach the spot where the alarming shot had been fired.

"Oh, Cap'n," howled Shorty this time, at the top of his lungs.

Again no answer.

The perspiration was dripping from the face of Shorty and Club Foot George.

Each outlaw was thoroughly frightened.

"Whar d'ye suppose the Cap'n's gone?" whispered Club Foot George.

"I dunno! Say, George, thar's summin up thar in them piece o' woods thet looks ter me like a man a lyin' down."

"Whar?"

Shorty pointed.

"Pint yer figure lower," George cried, "thar's the place! I see ut myself."

Both men saw a heap of something lying in the edge of the timber.

There was something about the uncouth pile that suggested a dead man.

No longer wondering but sure that their leader, Furneaux lay there dead, the two outlaws rushed to the still form.

"This is the Cap'n, poor fellow, I wonder who shot 'im—no by thunder, this ain't no Cap'n Furneaux, this hyar is thet half-breed feller in our band. The Rat!"

"Gosh! So it is. Say, he was hit through the head. Blown most o' the top o' his head off. One o' them repeatin' rifles did that. Waal he's dead, but—"

"Whar's the Cap'n?"

The two men looked at each other with wonder. Then the facts began to piece themselves out to each slow witted brain.

"Some one hez Bush-whacked the Cap'n," shouted Club Foot George.

"The Cap'n's body mus' be hyar in these bushes," added Shorty Adams.

"Boys begin er sarch," suggested Club Foot George. They searched but could find no body.

"He mus' bin taken prisoner," howled Shorty, as Club Foot George darted up the hill toward the bushes.

Club Foot George caught, just then, a glimpse of the hanging skeleton.

His fearful screech was worse than the yell of an infuriated catamount.

"Good Gord!" yelled the frightened bandit. "Helup! Helup!"

His screams brought Shorty Adams to his side his dreaded gun at full cock ready to shoot any invader.

But he was nerveless in a minute.

He did not have strength enough to pull the trigger to his gun.

"My Gord!" Shorty howled. "A ghost!"

In turn others of the bandits lurched up the hill only to retreat in white-faced yelling dread.

Club Foot George in spite of his game leg was twenty feet in the lead of the fleeing bandits when camp was reached.

The rest of the band came streaming on behind like a flock of geese going South in the fall.

No one even thought of the body of The Rat.

Wild animals could eat it if they wished, or it could fester back to dust again, unwatched and unburied.

In the fierce light that beat around the life of an outlaw in the North-West there was no time for burial of a dead member of an outlaw band, especially when the dead man was a half-breed Indian.

That night there was a long consultation held by the outlaws.

First a new chief was elected.

The man to whom the honor fell of taking Furneaux' place was Club Foot George.

Then the band decided that in all probability that Furneaux was a prisoner to Wink Stone and his party.

"You boys know," shrieked Club Foot George, "thet wen our real leader the Cap'n comes back ter us, ef he ever does cum back, thet this hyar 'lection o' me don't go?"

"Sure, we does," replied Shorty Adams speaking for the band. "We aint er goin' ter haz ye lead us long arter the Cap'n cums back."

Club Foot George walked over to the camp fire.

There was boiling on it a great kettle of whiskey punch.

Club Foot George scooped up a tin cup full of the almost boiling mixture.

He offered it in turn to the bandits.

Not one would taste the mixture.

"I aint bad enough yit," said Shorty Adams, "ter drink me lickker boilin' hot."

Club Foot George grinned.

He lifted the cup to his mouth and without a blinking of his eyes drained every drop of the fiery stuff.

Then Club Foot George turned the cup upside down to show that he had swallowed every drop.

"I don't drink me lickker made right fer babies who use nussin'-bottles," Club Foot George yelled, "I wanter tell ye fellers thet I'm bad clean through and I drinks me booze boilin' hot an' I aint a-goin' ter take no sass frum any man in this hyar gang."

Club Foot George thus asserted himself in his leadership of the band.

One great hulking outlaw, Red Thompson, was not sure that he was pleased with the election of Club Foot George.

"Wall, we ain't all on us got used ter drinkin' as ye hev, sense ye hold up unarmed men in saloons," Red drawled.

"Yar a sneakin' liar," cried Club Foot George, "ef ye mean my hol'-up o' the Dew Drop Inn. Thet bar-keep Major Hunter had a gun all right. I jest nat'ly got the drop on um, so he can't kick o' unfairness. 'Twas a quick jump fer a gun and I get's thar fust."

"Thet's the way ye tells it, eh?" sneered Red Thompson angrily, now trying to assert himself and get a following in the gang.

Club Foot George asserted himself by one long look in return at Red.

"Ef ye wanters ter dispute the findin' o' this hyar 'lection," Club Foot George shouted lustily, "I'm hyar ter put up a fight fer me title."

"That's the stuff. Fight fer it boy, an' we'll see what cums o' it," cried Shorty Adams. "I'll second ye, ef ye wants, Club Foot George."

"I'll second ye, ef ye wants," cried Jack Thacher, better known in the gang as Coyote Jack, to Red.

"A fight fer the leadership," cried the bandits.

"Hurrah!" shouted another.

"Good sports," yelled a third.

"We ain't seen a good fight in er long while," cried still another outlaw.

In Furneaux' band there had been a rule made by the vanished bandit that there was to be no fighting with any deadly weapon in the many fierce differences of opinion that were constantly coming up in the band.

"We aren't so many," Furneaux used to urge, "that we can spill each other's blood and take each other's lives. If there's any thing that goes to a gang's vote and we can't agree on it, then there can be a fight between any two men one representing each side, London prize ring rules. The winner gets the thing he fought for. The loser takes his losses like a man and no hard feelin' after."

This policy made a strong card in the Furneaux gang.

It kept rivalry within very good bounds, made sport for all the band and didn't lessen its numbers as it might if deadly weapons were used in the arbitration of every misunderstanding.

Following this rule the battle between Club Foot George and Red Thompson was not an unusual one, although several who supported George for leadership felt that he ought not to have allowed himself to go into the fight as he was handicapped by his game leg.

But in a trice the two men stood facing each other

on the green turf, each man with his fists raised in true prize ring fashion.

The great hairy chest of Club Foot George was rising and falling easily for he had stripped to the waist for the fight.

He felt no fear of the result and he stood on his well leg awaiting the onslaught of his antagonist without fear.

Red Thompson was taller than Club Foot George by several inches.

But his skin was pinker; he was "softer" to use a trainer's expression, and not nearly as well muscled as his antagonist.

There was not much opportunity to judge of the "wind" of either man, but in spite of their constant whiskey drinking, the very worst thing men who wish to lead in athletic events can do, they had led such a constant out door life, that there was enough stamina in each to fight with and the battle must needs be a fierce one, every bandit thought.

"Round One!" cried Dead-Shot Bill Thayer, who was the self constituted referee of the fight. "Now, gents this hyar is ter be nroified London Prize Ring Rules. Thar's ter be five minute rounds. Ye two men must break clean but you can hit as soon as er man gits to his knees. Knockout count ten, as ez usual. A man wot aint up on his feet arter ten ez counted is out fer good."

The contestants nodded.

"It aint no real London P. R. Rules," growled one of the gang, "ner it aint no Markis o' Queensbury rules—"

"It's Furneaux' rules an' thets the best that is about 'em; they is the rules o' this har gang, and we are the gang."

"Hail! Hail! The gang's all here, what the — do we care now," sang the outlaws with fierce insistence.

They had adopted this tune as their gang tune.

"Now then, shake han's fer roun' one," cried Dead-Shot Thayer.

As he spoke the two men silently shook hands.

Thompson darted directly at Club Foot George. The latter had crouched down and whirled around like a pivot, awaiting his antagonist.

The two men fiddled a second.

The brawny right of Red Thompson swung for George's head.

George ducked and the blow went wild, but he sent his left directly at the spot over the heart of Thompson.

"Huh!" growled the struck bandit.

But as he took the blow he swung with his left in a straight arm jolt which landed on George's forehead and ripped up his scalp a trifle as easily as if done with a knife.

"Fust blood fer Red Thompson," cried the referee.

There was a wild gleam in the eyes of Club Foot George as he slowly limped toward Thompson, who not looking George in the face but once, and not liking what he saw, began making a foot-race of it, and slowly swung in a circle about Club Foot.

Red was a mystery of the leaping panther style of fighting.

His footwork was fine and he began going into George with great leaps.

His blows began to tell.

He was the better boxer of the two.

He seemed to put them over where he liked.

George's eyes were soon half shut.

His nose was bleeding and he was covered with blood. Thompson was fresh, and while he had given many blows few had been returned.

"Say, Red's got George whipped to a frazzle in the first round!" cried one of the outlaws.

The bandit spoken to looked at a red spot constantly increasing right over the heart of Red on his left side and said one sentence.

"Two hund' ter one-hund' thet George goes six roun's," he whispered.

"Done!" cried the other bandit, "thet's easy money fer me."

The betting then became fast and furious.

There were a few half hearted blows given on each side and when the Referee called "time" at the end of the round, both men were not in the finest condition, and it was seen that each had more respect for the other than when the battle began.

That is why the manly art of boxing has got the gun-play of the savage beaten.

The second round opened with another panther-rush by Red.

He bored into Club Foot George and seemed to rain blows upon him without a return.

"Give it to him, Red," howled Thompson's friends. "Put it to him hot! Ye hev him goin' now!"

The friends of Club Foot George was very down-hearted.

"Is our man licked?" said one of them in an undertone to a man with a real prize-fighter record.

"Licked! You make me sick! He hasn't begun to fight yet."

The speaker knew what he was talking about.

In one of his panther-like rushes George got to him.

He caught red around the waist, cross-buttocked him, and sent him head first to the turf with the wind pretty nearly knocked out of him.

Red rolled over got to his knees.

Quicker than a streak of greased lightning Club Foot George was over the prostrate man.

"Look out, George," his friends cried. "Look out for a foul! Don't lose this fight on a foul!"

George had his wits about him, however.

He waited until Red was on his knees.

Whack! Biff!

Right on his nose, again on his chin, came two swift powerful half arm jolts from Club Foot George's fists.

Red went down as if a locomotive had hit him.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight," droned the referee.

"Get up, Red! Get up! You'll be counted out in a second. Get up!"

These shouts come from friends of Red Thompson.

The voice of Club Foot George's second could be heard roaring to his man over the din.

"Watch him, George," roared the second. "Watch him! You've got him! When he gits up on his knees let him have it agin!"

"Nine," came the steady voice of the referee.

But Red Thompson was no fool.

The two swift punches taught him a lesson.

Before the referee could possibly saw the fatal "ten" which would give a knock out and the match to Club Foot George, Red rolled quickly to one side, was up, and boring into George in a trice.

Whang!

Whing!

Two blows directly on George's head quicker than he could take to put up his hands so unexpected was the assault knocked him clean off his feet.

But before Red could follow up his advantage he was over on his feet, and up again, and the two men were at each other hammer and tongs, no thought of science, no thought of rules, mixing it up, arms going like flaes, and just grimly standing up and whacking at each other like two mad things.

"Time!" cried the referee, as he rushed under the swinging arms and fairly tore the two men apart.

Both men were showing punishment.

Soon the third round begun, and it went just two seconds.

Red went in as usual boring for his man.

Club Foot George put on directly, straight from the shoulder on Red's jaws.

The blow put Red into by-bye land in a trice.

"The cleanest knockout I ever saw!" cried the referee as he counted the fatal ten.

It was half an hour later before Red came out of the mysterious sleep Club Foot George's big fist had handed to him.

As for George he soon had washed all traces from his face, patched up his scalp and was quietly dipping out a big cup full of boiling punch again as if nothing had happened.

The bandits sat around in admiring silence.

"Say, boys," cried one, "ef that thar Furneaux don't show up this hyar band hez got er leader, all right."

Yet, this man who had fought with courage, and won a fine battle of fists not two hours before had rushed away in fear-panic from a skeleton.

Man is a queer animal.

CHAPTER IX.

"WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?"

"Well?"

Ned Ford asked this single word of Wink Stone.

The two young men stood in the post-office of the hamlet of Constable.

The entire party, after the capture of Furneaux the outlaw, and the scaring off of Club Foot George and his friends by the subterfuge planned by Wink to exhibit a skeleton in the paths he felt sure the outlaws would take in trying to find their missing leader, had without trouble reached the town of Constable, where the father of Carrie Denton received her with open arms.

He warmly congratulated Wink on his gallantry.

Even Dominie Scattergood woke up enough to congratulate Wink on his gallant deed.

"You have indeed rescued, ah, us!" he cried. "I was fearful at one time that you waas not in youah, right ah, mind, but I am glad to say that you undoubt-edly knew youah business."

As for Carrie Denton there was a gleam of mischief in her eyes as she said farewell for a time to Wink.

"Well, your plans went through," she said mockingly.

"They have," sheepishly rejoined Wink.

"Have you no other plans?"

"I'll tell you one I have some time."

"What is it?"

"A re-markable wedding journey!"

Carrie blushed and whirled into the house in a hurry. Soon her head reappeared.

"I hope you are not going to take that journey alone, are you?" she asked just before she disappeared for the time being.

Wink stood staring after her.

"If any one goes on a wedding journey with me, 'twill be you, my girl," muttered Wink. "Your just the kind of a girl I think would make me the kind of a wife I've been looking for."

Wink then hurried to meet his side-partner, Ned Ford, who in his capacity of a constable in the Royal North-West Mounted Police had been given full charge of Furneaux the outlaw.

"Well?" questioned Ned Ford of Wink.

"Well what?" replied Wink.

"Well what next?"

"I dunno. The next thing is up to you."

"Up to me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Don't you see that it must be. The bandit is yours. I ain't a-chasin' bandits for a living."

"Well, neither am I."

"In this case you've got some trouble ahead of you, even if you are not a professional bandit catcher."

"Why?"

"How are you going to get that bandit over to Emerson House, where he can be jailed? There's no jail here."

"Form a posse and take him over."

"A posse? Where?"

"Here in this town."

"You'd be better off if you formed a posse in the forest among the rabbits. Who is there here to help you?"

"There's some men here!"

"Yep. But they won't do anything for you. There's that hot air General Whitton. He'd be a fine game for a fighter when your posse was rushed by Club Foot George and the bandits, whom you may rest assured aren't going to let you capture their leader and get away with it if they know it."

Wink spoke the bitter truth the young policeman knew.

It was a desperate chance he would take to try and move his prisoner to Emerson House but he would have to take it, he feared.

"I hate to try and get that chap moved to Emerson House but I fear I must try. There's no jail here."

"Where have you got Furneaux confined?"

"In a room back of this building—I mean in the back part of the building where he's safe for the present."

"Ah."

"Why do you say 'ah'?"

"Because I prefer not to say Oh—I like Oh, better than Ah, but I preferred saying Ah to Oh, this time, because I've said Oh so much to your remarks lately that it's getting monotonous."

"Well, I suppose you have a plan to present. You usually do."

"Hum. Thanks for the compliment. My boy, just one question have I to ask you."

"Ask it."

"What were your orders from the Inspector of the Royal North-West Mounted Police as to your mission here?"

"I was told to come here and arrest Club Foot George, who was wanted in Yukon territory for robbing miners of their gold, too much gun-play, running off with the daughter of an Injun and marrying her—selling whisky to Indians, oh, Lordy, man, I don't know half the crimes that chap has committed."

"Was anything said about Furneaux?"

"Nothing. He was not known to be here at all. He was supposed to still be up Yukon way."

"Hum. Nothing else said to you?"

"Nothing. That is nothing officially."

"Oh, then there was something said to you?"

"Y-e-s."

"Tell me all there is to it. If you don't I can't help you. Tell all your orders man, or I can't help you."

"W-e-l-l. Inspector Pearl said to me just as I was leaving, 'Now I want you to get that chap, Club Foot George if you can on that warrant you have. But it is a good many hundred miles to where you must go, there's only the almost trackless wilderness about you most of the way. It takes twice as much to carry two, twice as much as it does one. If you should happen to not get that fellow, and came back alone, and that fellow was never heard of again, why I wouldn't shed a tear.'"

"So I thought. The Inspector also told you never to state that he had so spoken, for if you did he would deny it down to his grave."

"He did—but how did you know?"

"I'm going to start a detective agency soon, right here. I think I can make a go of it. I've got one cop stopped in the first round."

"But your plan—what of that?"

"I was thinking of that. It would seem to me that I have one that with your kind permission I will put over to-night."

"What is it?"

"None of your business."

"I like that."

"So do I. You know you have your inside 'orders' to forget Club Foot George, somewhere between here and Fort Coppermine, where the Inspector has his headquarters?"

"Well, you might look upon it that way."

"And you have no orders at all as to Furneaux—he is out of the photograph entirely."

"So you might term it."

"Now my plan is to get rid of both the bandit Furneaux and Club Foot George at once."

"What?"

"That's my plan."

"How? Lynching won't do?"

"No, I'd be afraid there would be no possibility of pulling off that. There's not enough sand among the men in this place to lynch a kitten."

"Then what is your plan?"

"Haven't got any."

"I thought you said you had."

"I mean I haven't got any to tell you. All I want you to do is to sit tight and say nothing. I'll do all the thinking, planning and acting."

CHAPTER X.

THE OUTLAW'S ESCAPE.

"You won't put me in a hole with the department?"

"Nary hole. If you don't get promoted for faithful service I'll be very much surprised."

Before acceding, Ford thought pretty carefully over the plan of Stone's. He knew that so far as Furneaux was concerned he did not care a hill of white beans whether he took him to Emerson House or not.

Emerson House had its full quota of outlaws to deal with and needed no more.

There was nothing there anyway, but a fur trading post.

Emerson House was so named to indicate one of the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the past the company usually called their trading posts forts, and had them pretty well fortified, but since they had ceded all their property to the Dominion of Canada, excepting ten acres of land around each of their old forts, they had usually named their new fur-trading posts "Houses."

Thus Emerson House had gained its name from the first postmaster for the company as the reigning head of the Hudson's Bay Company at this post or house as it was called, he having been a Mr. Emerson.

Just what he could do with Furneaux was a poser after he had got him to Emerson House.

A sheer stretch of seven hundred miles lay between Fort Coppermine and Emerson House, and how to transport a criminal ready at any time to battle for his life, was a graver question than getting the criminal to Emerson House.

"Sometimes I have to go on for days and guess at the trail after I leave Emerson House for Fort Coppermine," thought Ford. "Well, I'll do the best I can. I'll let this friend of mine, Wink Stone, try out his plan. It won't do any harm."

Wink knew that he was dealing with a bandit who would kill him in a second had he the power, was not very scrupulous as regards the manner in which Furneaux was disposed of.

If he had his way, he would have walked up to Furneaux confined as he was, put a revolver to his head and blown his brains all over his prison with much less compunction than he would have killed a rat.

But there was much of the element of the class of men who feel that a caged bandit should be treated like a free Prince about Constable and so Wink had decided to go slow.

After waiting a while for Ford to speak Wink chipped in.

"I suppose I may as well keep my hooks in this game?" he asked.

"Yes. There's nothing else to do. Try out your plan."

Wink laughed.

"Where is that bull dog of Club Foot George's?" he asked next.

"Locked in another room," smiled Ford.

"Oh."

"Is that all you want to ask?"

"It is. Good night."

"I guess that Wink doesn't wish to tell me his plan—and I shrewdly suspect that I'd better not know anything about his plan at that."

So speaking Ford "turned in" for a good night's sleep.

It was near midnight of the same night that Furneaux, the bandit chief, heard a window in the room in which he was confined open softly.

"Who's there?" he cried.

There was no answer.

It was a wild night he could see from where he was tied to a chair, by glancing through the window which up to now had been tightly shut and barricaded from the outside.

The wind was blowing a hurricane.

The rain was beating down in sheets.

There was nothing but a howling gale outside, the bandit was sure, but he wished to be free, and cared not for twenty howling gales.

No answer having been returned to the bandit's hail, he waited in wonder.

"Is that you Club Foot George?" he cried.

Still there was no answer.

"Is that any of my men?" he asked again after a moment's pause.

There was no answer.

But after a second in which the whistling wind and the rush of rain came to the outlaw's ears was something that was dropped softly on his two menaced hands.

A cry of joy escaped from the bandit.

The thing he clutched quickly in his hands he knew at once was a file.

One end of the file had been beaten into the rude form of a knife.

It was sharp, and the outlaw saw that if he could file off his handcuffs that he would be able to cut his other bonds quickly.

Furneaux, except for the time he was allowed to eat and drink, had been kept securely bound by Constable Ford.

The Constable knew Furneaux too well to allow him to roam about the room unguarded and unbound.

That was simply putting a way of escape directly in the outlaw's hands.

Just as soon as Furneaux could, he began to get to work with his file.

"Isn't this luck? I wonder who put this file over? Some one who will not care for me to know who it was? Well, whoever it was that gave me this file knew what was wanted by a man in my pickle."

Furneaux' deeds were devilish enough in the past to have sent him to many a prison.

"But he 'broke jail' about as soon as he was confined in one.

He seemed to know the weakest point in every penal institution he had ever been confined in.

His last stunt was to break jail at Dawson, where he was wanted for a very brutal murder, by letting himself from his cell window, after he had sawed the iron bars that grated his window into two pieces, by means of a rope made from the sheet of his bed.

As he was a very heavy man, the danger of a sheer descent of fifty feet from his cell to the nightly silent street below, was something that was to be thought of but not attempted by the average felon.

But Furneaux knew that he would be hanged if he stayed in jail; and it was better to risk death by a fall

—well here he was, with only a ten-foot drop in soft mud between him and liberty.

What did he care for the wild night?

He would risk a wetting and a night hid in the woods weaponless rather than be carted back to death for he knew that now he had been captured that unless he was rescued by his outlaw band that he would be doomed and would be sooner or later returned to his old cell in Dawson to be executed for murder.

"They'll not get me this trip," he cried with a merry laugh. "There goes one handcuff."

Soon by dint of patience and filing the other handcuff was off the outlaw's wrist.

In a second more the knife had severed the complicated system of ropes by which he was confined.

"Free!" the outlaw whispered to himself. "Free! No jail ever again for me—I will get back to my boys and I'll rush down on this town to-morrow and kill that infernal policeman Ford, you bet, and his side partner Wink Stone, the first thing."

This resolution even in the darkness caused the face of the outlaw to wear an expression of deep malice and wrath.

He looked the part of a man ready to perform a hideous murder.

Then slowly step by step, Furneaux crept to the open window.

"It's darker than a stack of black cats," he said to himself, as he tried to peer out. "I guess that's the best thing for me. Now let me think. The forest where the boys are is over there to the right. I'll let myself down gently as far as I will go. I'm ten feet in the air. I'm six feet tall—well I've got to jump or drop rather, four feet in a lot of soft mud. Say, this escape is the easiest thing I ever pulled off!"

The bandit let his tall form fall to its full length while he held on to the window with his hands.

"Here goes," he cried.

He let himself drop.

His feet touched the ground.

Before he could raise a hand there was a fierce growl.

Something clutched him at his throat.

A bulky animal grasped the outlaw by the throat.

A fierce yell of rage rent the air.

Then fangs closed on the throat of the bandit.

He was dragged hither and thither.

His cries for aid were stifled by the deadly pressure on his throat.

His blood began to flow in a great crimson stream.

He tried weakly to defend himself. Then he fell backward to be worried, and harried and bitten hour after hour, by Bull the fierce dog owned by Club Foot George, until the bandit chief's soul had left his body and there was only a faint resemblance left in the mangled corpse of the man who had tried to escape.

Furneaux had indeed been "lost in the forest!"

* * * * *

It was daylight when Ned Ford awoke.

He saw that the fierce storm of the night was over.

Something caused him to look out of the window of his room which overlooked the post-office building where he had left Furneaux a prisoner on the previous night.

Ford's face went white when he saw the dead body of the outlaw lying on the ground while the terrible

bull-dog of Club Foot George was still biting at the throat of the dead bandit.

The dog was still lariatied but he was unmuzzled. "Some one left the window of Furneaux' room open last night. They slipped his banditship something to let him get out of his handcuffs and to cut his rope with, I see," said Ford to himself.

He stood lost in thought for a moment.

Then he stepped to his window.

He now held his rifle.

He took deadly aim at the frightful dog.

There was a sharp report, a flash of flame.

The dog curled up like a dry leaf under a tempest and died.

"That settles the dog, who settled the bandit," said Ford to himself. "He will tell no tales of how he became unmuzzled."

No one seemed to have heard the shot.

In a few moments Ford left his room. He went to the dog, dragged it by his lariat to the Constable River that ran on the outskirts of the village, tied a big stone to the dog and then flung the dead animal far out into the fast flowing river.

"There's one end to the secret," cried Ford, with his widest smile.

He returned to the post-office to find Wink Stone awaiting him.

Stone jumped back in startled wonder apparently when he saw the dead body of the outlaw.

"Tried to escape," he asked, "got his from some animal?"

"Yes, Furneaux is dead," returned the policeman, "and I'm bothered to know what killed him. His throat has been chewed into bits by some animal."

"Probably a wild cat," cried Wink.

"Possibly," replied Stone.

Both men smiled at each other darkly.

There are people in Constable to-day who think that there is still a wonderful mystery around the death of Furneaux the outlaw.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTLAWS ON THE TRAIL.

"We hez got ter the bottom of thet thar mystee-reious dis'appearin' act of the folks thet was lead ter Constable, and kep' Furneaux, our leader a prisoner thet," said Club Foot George the following morning.

"Hev, hey? Ez how?" said Shorty Adams.

"Wall twas this a-way. I was a philanderin' thru them woods at day break er trying ter git to the bottom of thet mystery by which Wink Stone an thet party gits off an' ketches Furneaux."

"Wall, ye is holdin' yar leadership serios like an' dooin' yar duty by them wot elects yer, by a gittin up and thinking er 'bout them chaps under ye by a tryin' ter git to the botterm of this thar trouble."

Club Foot George nodded.

"I'll do my dooty by ther gang," he bawled. "Don't ye forgit thet. An' it was in dooin' thet dooty thet I wins the secret o' the way them fellers escaped."

"How was ut?"

"Thet thar tree thar et is th' beginning o' the inside o' thar escape. We two fellers, me an' you'll go thar, an' see what we kin see. I guess we ain't ergoin' ter fin' no trouble in gittin' ter wot we want?"

"Good! Les' start."

Without saying a single word to any one in the gang, Club Foot George and Shorty Adams hurried away to wind up the mystery of the disappearance of Wink Stone and his party bearing away the outlaw, Furneaux a captive.

The two bandits went on foot.

They soon reached the blasted tree with the marshy spot of awe, and shuddered as they saw a flock of buzzards tearing the flesh of their dead gang member, The Rat, who still lay where the shot from the rifle of Wink Stone had entered the half-breed's brain.

"Thet's a hard fate," surlily said Shorty Adams.

"You bet! Ets wot we may come to any minute. I've often been a thinkin' lately thet this hyar outlawry ain't a payin' game."

"Devils, man, in course it ain't, but ef we didn't stiek ter it, say we'd have ter go to work!"

"Wall, anythin's better than a goin' ter work. Say, every time I thinks o' work, I quivers clar through me."

"Say, so does I."

This rather universal excuse for entering careers of crime occupied the men until they reached the cabin, in which had hung the skeleton that in such uncanny fashion had doffed his head, rather than his hat, to Dominie Scattergood.

The skeleton had in some occult and mystic fashion reunited itself.

It hung again in the shadow of the doorway where it had performed such spectral tricks for the startled Dominie, and others in the beleaguered party.

Its companion spectre again swayed in the wind hanging to the tree.

How it could have unwound itself from the place where it was used as part of Stone's plan to capture Furneaux, walked back to its old tree, where it was found hanging by Wink, and tie itself to its original position was a poser, that of course Club Foot George and Shorty Adams could not understand.

They knew nothing of what had previously transpired and they were in a tremor of nervous fear when they saw the swaying skeleton on the tree and the mysterious second skeleton lurking in the shadow of the doorway of the cabin.

"Gosh!" cried Club Foot George. "Wull ye look at thet skeleton hangin' up on that thar tree. U-g-h!"

A fit of trembling seized the outlaw.

A spook scared him as nothing else would.

He would have faced anything but the terrors of the supernatural world.

Shorty Adams was equally terrified.

His face was white as chalk.

His open mouth and staring eyes, and his trembling form showed that he was on the verge of a nervous collapse.

"Thunder!" cried Shorty. "This hyar mus' be the hanted cabin thet all the old frontier men talk of."

"It mus'," cried Shorty. "Now when we move erbout we must watch thet thar skeleton thar hangin' up carefully. He's the chap thet they say shoots an' kills people thet git inter ther game hyar. See?"

Cautiously Shorty began to whirl about the hanging skeleton.

He was pop-eyed when he saw the skeleton whirl about so that its head and the socketless eyes were always facing him.

Shorty tried the natural trick of trying to go in the opposite direction.

Once more the skeleton swung in the opposite direction.

Shorty almost fainted in his surprise.

What was the inside reason for this whirling skeleton, thought Shorty.

He decided that playing peek-a-boo with a skeleton was not what it is cracked up to be.

Shorty sat down.

His eyes wandered to where Club Foot George was stealing along toward the cabin door.

George had thought it wise to try and get within the cabin, and so he walked quickly to where he saw the lurking skeleton in the doorway.

"Hyar's another one," cried George, "I'll go inter thet room en see wots thar."

Club Foot George hurried toward the figure in the doorway.

Shorty Adams watched with all his eyes.

He saw a movement on the part of the lurking skeleton.

Then there came a quick shot.

Pop!

The skeleton had raised its arm with remarkable quickness. It had fired a revolver directly at the head of the stealthily approaching outlaw. Club Foot George.

Club Foot George hurled one shriek of pain out from his lungs.

It was the last sound he ever made.

The skeleton's aim this time was truer than when it had fired at Wink Stone.

Club Foot George spun round on his heels.

Then as a great tree in the forest falls under the woodsman's axe, Club Foot George fell forward on his face, dead with a bullet through his heart.

The skeleton then took off its hat, bowed low, and began throwing itself backward into the misty depths of the mysterious cabin.

Finally with nothing left but its back-bone the skeleton sank down with a shivering little motion, to the same pile of bones that the eyes of Wink had beheld.

A wind soughed through the skeleton hanging in the tree.

It seemed to be chuckling with ghastly glee at the form of the outlaw which lay face down, and with a rapidly widening patch of blood surrounding its stolid stillness.

The brooding mountains and the mysterious forest, watched with quiet glee as Shorty Adams fled from the scene back to the outlaw camp.

Then the silence was broken by the chuckling laughter of a living man, who seemed to think the quiet corpse of Club Foot George a thing to jeer at.

CHAPTER XII.

CARRIE DENTON DEMANDS AN EXPLANATION.

Wink Stone faced Carrie Denton later in the day with his usual nice merry way.

"Now I don't want any more fooling," cried the girl. "Wink, tell me all about the mystery of the haunted cabin."

"Why should I?"

"No hubby should ever have any secrets from his wify."

"Good theory but how about the practice—and when oh when are you to become wify?"

"Whenever you're ready, sir, she said," laughed the girl.

"To-morrow?"

"Yes. You might get a chance to ride out of my life if I didn't marry you quick—and I'd hate to have that happen—this promise being *conditional* you understand."

Although over-joyed as he possibly could be, Wink, asked the conditions attached to the promise made by Carrie.

"The conditions," the girl replied rubbing the place on her cheek which burned the reddest, "are these: You must tell me all about the haunted place of the mystic cabin in the woods."

"That's easy."

"All right, tell it then."

"A good many years ago there lived out here a rich and rather eccentric New York State man."

"Oh? He came from over in the United States?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on."

"He was robbed in some way by a gang of outlaws out here, in the cabin, which you call the mystic cabin, and which he called his hunting cabin and it became known as a 'place to rob any old time' by the bandits of that day."

"I see."

"Well the rich old duffer who only used it—the cabin I mean—a few months in each year, but who had it filled with valuable things, began to get angry. He argued that the cabin was where he once a year got 'near to nature,' shot big game, and had a lot of sport for a few months, and it ought to be left undisturbed."

"Certainly it had."

"So he put in a care taker when he was out of the country."

"What became of the care taker?"

"He lost three in a few months."

"How?"

"Outlaws got them."

"Oh."

"Yes. Then he got kinder hot about the collar and being a sort of a natural mechanic he began to make plans to keep his property intact."

"What did he do?"

"First he had a lot of trees planted about the cabin."

"What good did that do him?"

"He made them in a queer way."

"How was that?"

"He used the idea of what is known as 'a maze.'"

"I see. I see."

"You could enter the trail of green turf between the

trees and unless you knew the inner plans of the maze you would just keep wandering around in an indefinite period and circle until you found that you were getting nowhere——"

"In fact you were traveling really in a circle."

"Exactly. Now I know something about the construction of a maze."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I had heard of all the facts of the rich man's foolish expenditure of cash to keep intact a fifty cent hunting lodge from old hunters up here and when we were being chased by Furneaux' gang I just thought of the maze."

"How did you hit it so well?"

"That was pure luck. I hadn't an idea how to reach it but seemed to have a sense of an inner direction that made me act as I did, and which ended in our getting into safety in the depths of the maze."

"That action undoubtedly saved our lives?"

"I won't go that far, but I will say it solved then a very notty problem."

"I see something now."

"What do you see?"

"I see how you disappeared on your horse."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yes. The reason why you disappeared when I closed my eyes and very foolishly obeyed you by counting twenty, you simply waited until my eyes were closed and then rode off."

"You are right."

"The green trees along each side of the maze, and the green turf concealed the fact that you were riding away along the rim of a half-circle."

"You're on."

"And when your horse had jumped about ten to twenty-five feet, with my eyes closed, you had swung along the half circle of trees to the maze so that I couldn't see you, when I opened my eyes."

"Admirable! You're a wonder in seeing things."

"Don't laugh at me. But let me tell you, young man, it shows me that when I am married to you, that I mustn't shut my eyes. If I do Lord only knows where you will ride to."

Wink grinned

"I've got another thing to tell you," added the girl. "I see now how you showed me the haunted cabin one minute, and no cabin the other."

"How?"

"By the maze again."

"Exactly."

"No question of it. Things were easy that way. If you look down one of the mazy corridors that really go to the cabin—there it is. If you don't it vanishes, and there's more angles where you can't see it than there is where you can."

"You've hit it!"

"Of course. But there's one thing I haven't hit."

"What is that?"

"How the skeleton game was worked."

"That puzzled me a long time."

"Did you finally get to the bottom of that?"

"I did."

"Well, well! Don't you see how impatient I am?"

"I do."

"Then for goodness sake gratify my curiosity."

"That's the easiest thing in the world. Now we will take up the question of the skeleton hanging on the tree."

"Yes."

"He was run by a complicated system of clock-works, strings, and time locks to just keep any burglar out of the biggest bank on earth."

"Is it possible?"

"It assuredly is."

"Then explain it all to me."

"With great pleasure. It was this way—the skeleton was in connection by wires with a board that encircled it. This board was so deftly covered with grass that when I stepped on the board I did not know it, but supposed I was on the turf."

"Yes."

"When I went to the right the pressure of my feet on the board set in motion an electric battery and this battery made the skeleton swing to the right."

"Ingenious, wasn't it?"

"Very. When I turned in the opposite direction the concealed springs and wires made the figure turn that way also—"

"And added to the superstitious fears that seeing a skeleton swinging on a tree seems to come over the bravest man."

"Yes, I fancy that is it. But so much for the swinging skeleton. Now we are come to the chap in the doorway."

"You mean the skeleton that fired at you with a revolver?"

"Yes."

"The shot sounded real, didn't it?"

"It was a real bullet in a real revolver," cried Wink. "The only real thing about the entire performance was the bullet, powder and revolver—the rest was—well I'll tell you and you can judge."

"Oh, do," replied Carrie, "I'm dying to know all about it."

"The best thing from a mechanical standpoint that I have ever seen was in the mysterious figure that lurked within the doorway of the haunted cabin."

"Why?"

"He was hung there by a set of wires. When one stepped on the door-sill of the cabin, he released a spring underneath the doorsill that started a clock-work arrangement going."

"Oh!"

"Thus the ghost raised its arm, and fired a shot neatly where the heart of the usual man would be beating in the usual body."

"Then that was all there was to that mystery?"

"Exactly."

"Then your escape was a wonderful one!"

"It was. I don't see how I happened to be so lucky. The entire arrangement was exceedingly simple all on the plan of a spring-gun in the chicken-coop of Unc' Abraham. When that colored individual goes for the chicken, off goes the gun, and down goes Unc' Abe, with a charge of shot in his black skin."

"It's all very plain now—all but one thing."

"What is the one thing?"

"How did that skeleton take off his head, how, and then throw himself away, so as to speak."

"Just a lot of wires and clock work. One bit of wire pulled the head of the skeleton off its confounded shoul-

ders—say, that chap had me dead leery for awhile—and made the thing give a grotesque bow."

"Yes."

"Then another set of wires one by one pulled off bone after bone, and swung them back into the interior of the cabin."

"He! He! That then is how our skeleton friend engaged in the pleasing pastime of chucking himself into nothing but his back-bone?"

"That was the way."

"Instead of a mystery with a lot of ghosts, and a lot of hair-raising on one's head in fright, we have a lot of wheels going round, a bit of wire, some rope, two skeletons and a clever man behind setting up his little puppet show."

"My dear girl, that's all there is to ghosts in this world, or life in it either—we are all the puppets of some one who is 'pulling the wires that move us.'"

"I guess you're right."

"Girl and man mused a trifle and then they took up the thread of their conversation again."

"There's one mystery and I want you to unravel it for me, if you will—for I suspect that you can."

"Possibly—well, go ahead and ask me about this last mystery."

"Who opened the window and let Furneaux escape to his death, beneath the fangs of Club Foot George's terrible bull-dog?"

Wink laughed.

Then he grew sober.

"The plan was arranged by—now if I would tell you, I'd be sure that you knew, now wouldn't I?"

"Of course."

"But as it is you are guessing that I may know, whether I do or not?"

"Yes."

"Now my dear girl, get ready for the wedding tomorrow, yours and mine—and don't let such things as how a dead bandit died worry you."

This was the only reply that Carrie Denton Stone could ever get in after years from her husband, one of the successful pioneers of the business of the North-West, Wink Stone.

And as a matter of fact, dead outlaws are dead outlaws; the matter of how they died is only a slight unnecessary detail; outlaws dead or alive are not of much use in this merry world.

CHAPTER XIII.

SEARCHING FOR THE TREASURE.

Wink Stone went directly to the post-office to meet Ned Ford, the brave young constable of the Royal Mounted Police, to see if he had news of importance to impart.

"Nothin' doin'," cried Ned. "I've had that fellow Furneaux buried since you were here."

"Where did you plant him?"

"Up in the woods."

"Good plan!"

"I thought so. There's one thing to say to you that's in my heart."

"Say it."

"That was the best pulled over plan I ever saw."

"What plan?"

"Letting Furneaux escape to be killed by Club Foot George's bull-dog."

"Oh, that was the way the outlaw died was it?"

"H-u-m! Don't you know?"

"How do I know?"

"I thought you put up the game?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Gracious, what a bloodthirsty brute you must think me!"

"Didn't you put up the plot that led to Furneaux' death?"

"Didn't I eat your grandmother alive—man, I'm no plotter. I'm just a happy young mail rider who is going to marry the best girl in the world to-morrow, and I wouldn't know an outlaw if I met one on Main street, Constable, British North America, so he-lup me, dear sir."

This was all that Ned Ford could ever get out of Wink Stone, either, as to the facts underlying the death of Furneaux, the outlaw leader.

After a space Ford remarked that if Wink wished "he could keep his old secret" and then suggested that there was nothing more to detain him and he "guessed he would hike for Fort Coppermine the next day."

"Not until after the wedding?" asked Wink.

"Of course not until after that interesting event."

"In the meanwhile," added Wink, "we will have to go to the haunted house—alas, a haunted cabin no more, and see what we do see. You remember the treasures that Pirate John Morgan used to have the reputation of hiding in the precincts guarded by the haunted cabin?"

"I remember that there was a story to the effect that Morgan the pirate was wont to bury his treasure, his pirate's loot up in the haunted cabin's baliwick."

"Well, you remember the bit of wood we got from the tree where the first Mr. Skeleton was swinging?"

"I do."

"Well, I've translated the queer figures or letters-like on the back of this bit of wood."

"Good boy."

"Now I am not going to say more than it instructs any one needing John Morgan's treasure in his business to 'enter the cabin, dig in the center, and he will find his heart's desire!'"

Ned's eyes were like the harvest moon.

"Hurrah! Say, ain't this great? Man, with Morgan's treasure we will be rich for the rest of our lives."

"You bet! Wont it be fine? I hope it will tote up into the millions."

"It's bound to! Don't you know that Morgan was a pirate for years? Nothing was found after his death of his buried loot—why man, we are as rich as the richest man in the world, right now."

"I feel rich. Say, do I look rich? I'm getting cheesty now! But by the way Ned, do you know what I'm going to do?"

"No, I don't—how could I when half the time you don't know yourself what you are going to do?"

"Well, all right! Any way I'll tell you. I think I will postpone my return to Constable for at least a year. You see I am no bank and I didn't think I'd be able to make a wedding trip of more than two weeks, but with *this* windfall of Morgan's, why things have changed. Y-e-s! I think I'll go abroad and stay at least a *year*—there is so much of this gold of Morgan's that I can't possibly ever really spend it. What are you going to do?"

"Me? Oh, I'm going to resign from the Mounted Police force. It's a dog's life in it at best. I think I shall go to New York and buy a six story house on one of the fashionable streets there. This will cost me when its all finished and furnished several millions—but then, there so darned *much* to that Morgan gold that I really think I'll have to hustle to spend it all during my life time. There's no one coming after me, so I'm going to get all the fun of blowing in Pa Morgan's loot myself."

"All right then. Come on. Let's get up to the cabin and get the pelf."

The two young men were soon loping around the end of the last corridor of the maze which hid from them the haunted cabin.

"We came fast, didn't we?" said Ned as he pulled up his horse.

"We certainly did!"

"Well, to be the two richest men in the North-West and in the great millionaire class in the effete East, is something worth riding fast for."

"You bet your boots! Say, sometimes I feel like pinching myself. To think that it was reserved for us, we two young men, to find the loot of Pirate John Morgan, when people for years of research have not found it—well we are the two fair-haired boys."

"We surely are—why what's that?"

As Ned spoke he pointed to something that was to be seen on the hillside.

"What's what?" asked Wink.

"That—why it looks like a new made grave. I mean there on the hill. What are you studying the sky for?"

"Oh. Ah, yes, I see. It *does* look like a new made grave."

"Looks like one? Why you darned fool it is one."

Wink looked again.

"Yes it is one. Now who do you suppose was buried up here?"

"There seems to be a headstone there. I'm going to see what is on it—there seems to be some letters on it."

As he spoke Ned flung himself from his horse and rushed over to the mound.

"By thunder!" he cried.

Wink looked mildly amazed.

"Why thunder?" asked Wink.

"Say, do you know what this head-stone says to this newly-made grave?"

"Do I look like a man who makes it his business to guess what tombstones say?"

"Stop joking."

"I'm not. I'm very serious."

"This tombstone says that Club Foot George, the outlaw is buried here."

"Well what of it? I don't care two cent's whether Club Foot George the outlaw is buried there, or here or anywhere else. You and I are not a bit interested in the grave of Club Foot George. As long as he is filling one somewhere I'm perfectly satisfied. I can't raise George from his grave, boy oh, and I can tell you not for publication, but as an evidence of good faith, that I wouldn't raise Georgie if I could?"

"Look here, Wink, you are behind this sudden taking off of George the outlaw."

"Say ain't you going pretty far? You blamed the death of Furneaux on me. Now you're trying to shove the demise of Club Foot George on my shoulders. Say, are you trying to make me a regular bandit-killer by wholesale?"

"Now how do you suppose George died?"

"I can't really imagine, but if I was in the novel writing biz I wouldn't go far toward guessing that some one knowing that George would sooner or later want a better plot than to fancy that some one fixed up all these wheels and springs, and that when Club Foot George came along he got tangled up with the shooting skeleton, and got 'his' at its hands—of course I don't know any thing and care less. Outlaws don't cut much ice with me."

"It looks to me, Wink, you darned fraud, and general all round liar, that I can report that while I did serve the warrant, by a figure of speech, that as a matter of fact, the outlaw Club Foot George got lost in the woods!"

"And is planted quietly, as thugs ought to be—pretty deep I fancy."

"How deep did you dig his grave, Wink?"

"Me? What did I have to do with digging Club Foot George's grave? You go in and ask that skeleton why it shot George, if it did shoot him?"

This it may as well be remarked was the last thing ever heard of Club Foot George, and as for Shorty Adams and his gang, what became of them was never learned.

From the time that Shorty rushed away from his dead

leader and associate Club Foot George, nothing has ever been heard of him or the remainder of the Furneaux gang.

The chances seem to be that they "skipped" after losing two leaders.

"Now then all we have to do is to go in and get our gold!" cried Ned. "The way is clear! There's no bandits now to dispute the loot of John Morgan with us. And I want to get things going. It takes time to build a million dollar house in New York City."

"That's right," rejoined Wink. "I want to do some figuring too, as to the best route by which one can see the world in a year and see it all, both ways, coming and going."

The two men then hurried into the cabin.

They laughed when they saw the bones of the flying skeleton about them on every side.

There in the middle of the cabin was a great chest, just covered with earth.

Ned grasped Wink by the arm.

"Gosh!" he cried, "Look! there's John Morgan's millions!"

"By thunder! I guess you're right."

With bulging eyes, red faces, and hearts that beat like trip-hammers the two young men drew near the fated chest.

"Here's where we win out," said Wink in a joyful tone.

"Here's where we get to the millions!" cried Ned in a happy tone.

A few swift strokes with his foot let Wink get his hands under the great chest.

As Ned stooped down to help, he saw engraved on the chest these words—

The Treasure of John Morgan, Pirate.

"Look," he whispered to Wink. "See that inscription!"

"We are rich for life!" howled Wink.

His stalwart arms flew to the chest.

Ned aided him.

The men worked like fiends and at last the box or chest was wrenched loose.

In a few moments of excited, yet happy labor the chest was broken open.

"Now to touch our millions!" shouted Ned as he plunged his hands in the chest.

Wink did the same.

But the chest was empty!!

The only thing that it contained was a card which bore this word—

"Sold."

THE END.

The next issue will be "American Indian Weekly No. 18," entitled "The Red Massacre" or "The Hold-Up Men of Barren Lands."

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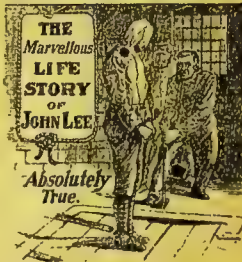
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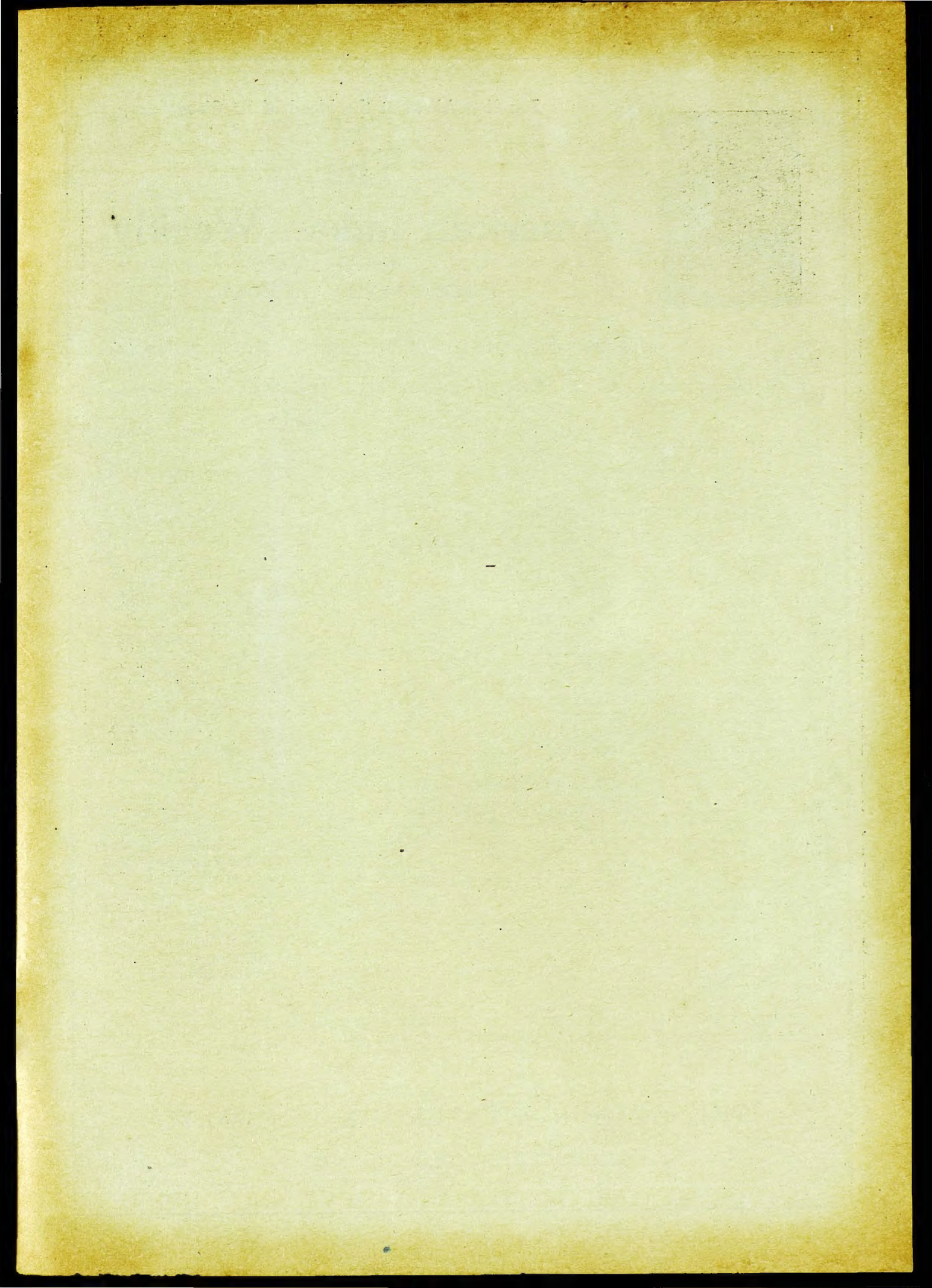
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No. 10. THE MIDNIGHT ALARMor The Raid on the Paymaster's Camp
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March 2—No. 14. THE TRAGEDY OF HANGMAN'S GULCH.....or The Ghost of Horn Mountains
March 9—No. 15. THE TREASURES OF MACKENZIE ISLES.....or The Outlaw's Drag-Net
March 16—No. 16. HELD UP AT SNAKE BASIN.....or The Renegade's Death-Vote
March 23—No. 17. THE MAIL RIDER'S DASH WITH DEATH.....or The Desperado of Poker Flat
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